

Hagiography, the Cult of Martyrs, and the Formation of Christian Identity in Late Antique Pannonia

Hajnalka Tamas



Presa Universitară Clujeană

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Center for Patristic Studies and Ancient Christian Literature
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca



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Although expanded, corrected, or nuanced, the core of this volume still represents my doctoral research. It is fit, therefore, to begin by thanking those who supported and shaped that endeavour: the promoters of my doctorate, Prof. Johan Leemans and Prof. Mathijs Lamberigts; and the correctors of my dissertation, Prof. David G. Hunter, Prof. Gert Partoens, and Prof. Anthony Dupont. Their patient and generous advice steered clear of obstacles, enabled the overcoming of cliffhangers, and tempered excesses. Born in the office of Prof. Leemans in a sunny afternoon in late September 2008, the project was nurtured throughout the years in the Leemans Research Group, the Research Unit History of Church and Theology from the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, and in many conversations with my Leuven colleagues and friends. A heartfelt thank you to all!

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abbreviations..... | XI |
| General Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1. Pannonian Hagiography: Introductory Remarks, State of the Art | 9 |
| 2. Delimitation of Contents | 18 |
| 3. Structure..... | 19 |
| 4. Chronology of Pannonian History in Late Antiquity | 26 |
| Chapter I: Quirinus of Siscia (BHL 7035-7039) | 27 |
| 1. Hagiographic Dossier | 27 |
| 1.1. <i>Passio Quirini</i> | 28 |
| 1.2. Literary Sources | 31 |
| 1.3. Ancient and Medieval Martyrologies..... | 35 |
| 1.4. Medieval Itineraries | 40 |
| 1.5. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources..... | 40 |
| 1.6. Concluding Observations on the Elements of the Hagiographic Dossier: Place and Date of Martyrdom; Translation of Relics | 44 |
| 2. <i>Passio Quirini</i> | 46 |
| 2.1. Redactions | 46 |
| 2.2. Historical Reliability; Date and Place of Composition | 51 |
| 2.3. Published Editions and Translations..... | 53 |
| Latin Text and English Translation | 54 |
| 3. Martyrdom and Episcopal Authority: A Commentary on the <i>Passio Quirini</i> | 62 |
| 3.1. Flight from Persecution..... | 63 |
| 3.2. The Exemplary Bishop | 64 |
| 3.3. The Bishop and the Christian Community..... | 66 |
| Chapter II: Irenaeus of Sirmium (BHL 4466) | 69 |
| 1. Hagiographic Dossier | 69 |
| 1.1. Late Antique Martyrological Sources | 70 |
| 1.2. Medieval Liturgical Sources | 72 |
| 1.3. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources..... | 74 |
| 1.4. Concluding Remarks on the Hagiographic Dossier | 76 |
| 2. <i>Passio Irenaei Sirmiensis</i> | 78 |
| 2.1. Extant Recensions and Their Relationship..... | 78 |
| 2.2. Relationship with the <i>Passio Pollionis</i> ; When and Where Was the <i>Passio</i> <i>Irenaei</i> composed? | 85 |
| 2.3. Historical Reliability..... | 91 |
| 2.4. Published Editions and Translations..... | 92 |
| Latin Text and English Translation | 94 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 3. Irenaeus, Bishop and Imitator of Christ..... | 100 |
| 3.1. Steadfastness in the Faith and the Imitation of Christ | 101 |
| 3.2. The Bishop as Sacrifice to God and Mediator between God and Humans..... | 102 |
| 3.3. The Bishop's Solidarity with the Community and Episcopal Teaching | 103 |
| 3.4. Hagiography and Episcopal Authority in Late Fourth-Century Sirmium..... | 105 |
| Chapter III: Pollio of Cibalae (BHL 6869) | 107 |
| 1. Hagiographic Dossier | 107 |
| 1.1. Late Antique Liturgical Sources | 107 |
| 1.2. Medieval Latin Martyrologies..... | 110 |
| 1.3. Archaeological and Literary Sources | 111 |
| 2. <i>Passio Pollionis</i> | 116 |
| 2.1. Date and Place of Composition | 116 |
| 2.2. Historical Reliability; Redactions | 119 |
| 2.3. Relationship with Other <i>Passiones</i> ; The Issue of Original Language..... | 123 |
| 2.4. Published Editions and Translations..... | 124 |
| Latin Text and English Translation | 126 |
| 3. <i>Passio Pollionis</i> : A Literary and Audience-Oriented Analysis | 132 |
| 3.1. The Use of Scripture in the <i>Passio Pollionis</i> | 132 |
| 3.2. Valentinian vs. Probus: The Antithesis..... | 134 |
| 3.3. Martyrdom and Apologetics: The Functions of Pollio's Confession | 135 |
| 3.4. The Accusations Brought against Pollio: The Issue of Virginitiy..... | 138 |
| Chapter IV: Syneros (Serenus) of Sirmium (BHL 7595-7596) | 141 |
| 1. Hagiographic Dossier | 141 |
| 1.1. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources | 141 |
| 1.2. Late Antique Martyrological Sources | 142 |
| 1.3. Medieval Martyrological Sources | 144 |
| 1.4. The <i>Magnum Legendarium Austriacum</i> | 146 |
| 1.5. Concluding Observations on the Hagiographic Dossier | 146 |
| 2. <i>Passio Sereni Sirmiensis</i> | 149 |
| 2.1. Introduction..... | 149 |
| 2.2. The Critical Text and Previous Editions..... | 151 |
| 2.3. Historical Reliability and Date | 155 |
| 2.4. Published Editions and Translations..... | 157 |
| Latin Text and English Translation | 160 |
| 3. Spiritual Development and Kairological Martyrdom in the <i>Passio Sereni</i> | 166 |
| 3.1. Temptation, Immorality, and the Garden..... | 166 |
| 3.2. Spiritual Development and Flight from Persecution..... | 170 |
| 3.3. <i>Passio Sereni</i> and Pannonian Christian Identity | 172 |
| Chapter V: Donatus, Venustus, Hermogenes and Companions (BHL 2309) | 173 |
| 1. Hagiographic Dossier | 173 |
| 1.1. <i>Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis</i> | 174 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1.2. <i>Martyrologium Hieronymianum</i> | 175 |
| 1.3. Concluding Observations on the Hagiographic Dossier | 177 |
| 2. <i>Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis</i> | 181 |
| 2.1. Relationship with the <i>Passio Pollionis</i> : Historical Reliability; Date of Composition | 181 |
| 2.2. Published Editions and Translations..... | 185 |
| Latin Text and English Translation | 186 |
| 3. <i>Scio unum Deum vivum et verum, qui est trinus et unus Deus</i> : The Relevance of Creedal Elements in the <i>Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis</i> | 194 |
| Conclusion | 201 |
| Bibliography | 207 |
| 1. Primary Sources | 207 |
| 2. Secondary Literature | 213 |
| Scriptural Index | 225 |
| Index of Ancient and Medieval Sources | 226 |
| Index of Ancient Names | 231 |
| Index of Modern Authors | 233 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>ActaAnthung</i> | <i>Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i> |
| <i>ActaSS</i> | <i>Acta Sanctorum</i> |
| <i>AKG</i> | <i>Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte</i> |
| <i>AnAl</i> | <i>Antichità Altoadriatiche</i> |
| <i>AnBoll</i> | <i>Analecta Bollandiana</i> |
| <i>AnTard</i> | <i>Antiquité Tardive</i> |
| <i>ArtB</i> | <i>The Art Bulletin</i> |
| <i>AS Es</i> | <i>Annali di storia del'esegesi</i> |
| <i>ASIA.NS</i> | <i>Atti e memorie della Società Istriana di Archeologia e Storia Patria. Nuova serie</i> |
| <i>BAC</i> | <i>Biblioteca de autores cristianos</i> |
| <i>BAR International Series</i> | <i>British Archaeological Reports. International Series</i> |
| <i>BEFAR</i> | <i>Bibliothèque des Ecoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome</i> |
| <i>BEL.S</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae. Subsidia</i> |
| <i>BETL</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium</i> |
| <i>BGBE</i> | <i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese</i> |
| <i>BHG</i> | <i>Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca</i> |
| <i>BHL</i> | <i>Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina</i> |
| <i>BHLms</i> | <i>Bibliotheca hagiographica Latina manuscripta</i> |
| <i>BHO</i> | <i>Bibliotheca hagiographica Orientalis</i> |
| <i>BHTh</i> | <i>Beiträge zur historischen Theologie</i> |
| <i>BSS</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Sanctorum</i> |
| <i>BSGRT</i> | <i>Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana</i> |
| <i>ByZ</i> | <i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i> |
| <i>CChr.SL</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina</i> |
| <i>CChr.CM</i> | <i>Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis</i> |
| <i>ChH</i> | <i>Church History</i> |
| <i>CIL</i> | <i>Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum</i> |
| <i>CivCatt</i> | <i>La Civiltà cattolica</i> |
| <i>CPF</i> | <i>Collection Les Pères dans la Foi</i> |
| <i>CPL</i> | <i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> |
| <i>CSEL</i> | <i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> |
| <i>CUF.SG</i> | <i>Collection des Universités de France. Série Grecque</i> |
| <i>CUF.SL</i> | <i>Collection des Universités de France. Série Latine</i> |
| <i>DACL</i> | <i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> |
| <i>FC</i> | <i>Fontes Christiani</i> |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| <i>FSI</i> | <i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i> |
| <i>GCS</i> | <i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte</i> |
| <i>HAW</i> | <i>Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft</i> |
| <i>Hist.</i> | <i>Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte</i> |
| <i>HLHR.NS</i> | <i>The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions. New Series</i> |
| <i>HThR</i> | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| <i>Hyp.</i> | <i>Hypomnemata: Untersuchungen zur Antike und zu ihrem Nachleben</i> |
| <i>ICUR</i> | <i>Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae</i> |
| <i>ILCV</i> | <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> |
| <i>IPM</i> | <i>Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia</i> |
| <i>JECS</i> | <i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> |
| <i>JEH</i> | <i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i> |
| <i>JFSR</i> | <i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i> |
| <i>JThS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> |
| <i>LCI</i> | <i>Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie</i> |
| <i>LCO</i> | <i>Lettres cristiane delle origini</i> |
| <i>LThK</i> | <i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i> |
| <i>MGH AA</i> | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi</i> |
| <i>MGH SRM</i> | <i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</i> |
| <i>OCM</i> | <i>Oxford Classical Monographs</i> |
| <i>OHM</i> | <i>Oxford Historical Monographs</i> |
| <i>PCBE</i> | <i>Prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Empire</i> |
| <i>PLRE</i> | <i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> |
| <i>QL</i> | <i>Questions Liturgiques</i> |
| <i>RechAug</i> | <i>Recherches Augustiniennes</i> |
| <i>RGA.E</i> | <i>Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde. Ergänzungsbände</i> |
| <i>RHE</i> | <i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i> |
| <i>RHT</i> | <i>Revue d'histoire des textes</i> |
| <i>RQ.S</i> | <i>Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde. Supplementheften</i> |
| <i>RSCI</i> | <i>Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia</i> |
| <i>SC</i> | <i>Sources Chrétiennes</i> |
| <i>SE</i> | <i>Sacris Erudiri: A Journal on the Inheritance of Late Antique and Medieval Christianity</i> |
| <i>SHEPL</i> | <i>Studies in History, Economics and Public Law</i> |
| <i>SHG</i> | <i>Subsidia hagiographica</i> |
| <i>Situla</i> | <i>Situla: Dissertationes Musei Nationalis Labacensis</i> |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| <i>SSAC</i> | <i>Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane</i> |
| <i>StT</i> | <i>Studi e Testi</i> |
| <i>SVigChr</i> | <i>Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae</i> |
| <i>ThesLL</i> | <i>Thesaurus linguae Latinae</i> |
| <i>TrC</i> | <i>Tria Corda: Jenaer Vorlesungen zu Judentum, Antike und Christentum</i> |
| <i>TU</i> | <i>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</i> |
| <i>VigChr</i> | <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> |
| <i>VS</i> | <i>La vie spirituelle</i> |
| <i>ZAC</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</i> |
| <i>ZKG</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i> |

General Introduction

The fourth and the fifth centuries AD can be characterized as an age of transformations. In this period the Roman empire went through its final grand crisis, leading to political, military, economic, social, cultural, and religious changes and challenges that re-shaped its outlook. These phenomena prepared the dramatic transition to the barbarian states of the sixth century in the West, and to the Byzantine empire in the East.¹

The disruption of the classical, senatorial model of administration, the militarization of the political landscape,² and the progressive de-centralization of power and authority brought about the rise of new types of elites.³ After the fall of the Danube *limes*, from the late fourth century on, the empire was forced to receive and settle within its borders those barbarians whom it could no longer repel: Goths, Huns, but also smaller groups of *foederati* living on imperial lands.

The presence of these barbarian groups, with a closely knit linguistic and religious identity, brought the socio-cultural diversity and the economic problems of the empire to a dramatic momentum. In a remarkably brief time-span the internal and external military actions of Rome and to a certain extent also of Constantinople came to depend largely on the recruitment of barbarian contingents. Their leaders rose to the highest ranks; then the unthinkable happened: All of a sudden, the empire was no longer threatened just from without, but had to deal also with the uprising of barbarian *foederati* within. For the first time in centuries, Rome was unable to assimilate these groups, which ravaged the Western provinces (Thracia and Illyricum first of all, next Gaul and Italy, finally Africa and Spain), deepening the social, administrative, cultural and religious rifts.⁴

¹ See, e.g., Peter J. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2005); Walter A. Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West: 376-568*, Cambridge Medieval Textbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

² Walter Pohl, "Rome and the Barbarians in the Fifth Century," *AnTard* 16 (2008): 98.

³ Rita Lizzi Testa, *Le trasformazioni delle élites in età tardoantica: Atti del Convegno Internazionale. Perugia, 15-16 marzo 2004*, *Saggi di storia antica* 28 (Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2006); Michele R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁴ On the Gothic migrations see: Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Peter J. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332-489*, OHM (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Noel Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2002); Michael Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars: From the Third Century to Alaric*, *Key Conflicts of Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Christianity admittedly played its role in this transformative dynamics. During the fourth century it became not only an accepted religion, but also an attractive choice for all social strata. Christians involved in administration and the clerical hierarchy now had access to the court,⁵ being thus able to influence imperial policies regarding various matters, not just religious ones.⁶ The dogmatic debates of the second half of the fourth century shook Christianity to the core,⁷ and had long-standing, albeit indirect, repercussions on the relationship with the barbarian *foederati*.

To give just an example, when the first groups of Goths and Huns crossed the imperial border in the 370s, their choice fell on Arian Christianity. Granted, Gothic Arianism was, technically speaking, not that radical.⁸ Yet, in times to follow, this doctrinal affiliation served the Goths as an identity-marker. Alongside the linguistic factor,⁹ it ensured their group cohesion, setting them apart from the rest of the empire, which progressively embraced neo-Nicene Christology.

⁵ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, The Transformation of Classical Heritage 37 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 2005), *passim*, esp. 242-289; Rudolf Haensch, "Die Rolle der Bischöfe im 4. Jahrhundert: Neue Anforderungen und neue Antworten," *Chiron* 37 (2007): 153-181.

⁶ Good examples of the changing relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority in the fourth century are Ambrose's interventions in imperial affairs, in confrontation with Gratian and with Theodosius. See Gunther Gottlieb, *Ambrosius von Mailand und Kaiser Gratian*, Hyp. 40 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973); John H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom: Clerics between Desert and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77-94; Kirsten Groß-Albenhausen, *Imperator christianissimus: Der christliche Kaiser bei Ambrosius und Johannes Chrysostomus*, Frankfurter althistorische Beiträge 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Buchverlag Marthe Clauss, 1999), 29-144. See further, on the relationship between doctrinal debate and the quest for power (and authority), Carlos R. Galvão-Sobrinho, *Doctrine and Power: Theological Controversy and Christian Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, The Transformation of Classical Heritage 51 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 2013).

⁷ On the Christological and Trinitarian controversies of the fourth and the fifth centuries, see: Michel René Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius. Essays on the Development of Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1993); Richard P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011); Uta Heil and Annette von Stockhausen, eds., *Die Synoden im Trinitarischen Streit: Über die Etablierung eines synodalen Verfahrens und die Probleme seiner Anwendung im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert*, TU 177 (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2017).

⁸ Gothic Christianity was extensively studied by Knut Schäferdiek. See the volume of his collected studies *Schwellenzeit: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Christentums in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, AKG 64 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), but also from his more recent works, Knut Schäferdiek, "Das gotische Christentum im vierten Jahrhundert," in *Triuwe: Studien zur Sprachgeschichte und Literaturwissenschaft. Gedächtnisbuch für Elfriede Stutz*, ed. Karl-Friedrich Kraft, Eva-Maria Lill and Ute Schwab, Heidelberger Bibliotheksschriften 47 (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei GmbH, 1992), 19-50; and Knut Schäferdiek, "Die Anfänge des Christentums bei den Goten und der sog. gotische Arianismus," *ZKG* 112, no. 3 (2001): 295-310.

⁹ John H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 49.

At the level of everyday life too, Christianity remodelled the traditional Roman values, especially that of the family.¹⁰ The blooming spiritual and ascetic movements soon became fashionable amongst the higher classes.¹¹ They were perceived as a more than safe alternative to the marriage-centred Roman mentality. The key social structure of Christianity was the community – local and wider – with its hierarchy and clergy, with its communitarian identity revolving around faith, liturgy, rites (baptism, Eucharist, the celebration of the martyr-cult, etc.), and the Christian sacralised space (the chapel, basilica, *martyrium*, monastery, pilgrimage site).¹²

Yet, the influence was mutual. Christianity was also affected by the political, economic and socio-cultural circumstances of the late empire. The fourth and the fifth centuries represent the first grand formative period of Christianity. The transition from a “persecuted” Christianity to a “triumphant” one went hand in hand with a certain reinvention – seeking and setting new identity-markers in order to come to terms with these changes. The Christological and Trinitarian debates certainly represent the most spectacular aspect of these attempts at self-definition. But Christian liturgy and rites were also being defined in this period; its hierarchical structures were taking shape;¹³ and the relationship with secular authority had to be sorted out. To return to the example of the Gothic conversion, Arianism was chosen not because Arian Christology was easier to fathom, but rather because Valens, the emperor who allowed their crossing in imperial territory, seemingly supported Arianism.¹⁴ The ascetic movement may have had deep roots in Christian spirituality, but it represented, at the same time, the guarantee of subsistence for many a low-born, bereft of financial means.¹⁵

¹⁰ For the consequences this shift of perspective had on late Roman society and on Christian self-perception, see Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹¹ See Elizabeth A. Clark, “Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism: Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine,” *JFSR* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1989): 25-46.

¹² Baudouin de Gaiffier, “Réflexions sur les origines du culte des martyrs,” in *Etudes critiques d'hagiographie et d'iconologie*, SHG 43 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1967), 14; Jean-Marie Salamito, “La christianisation et les nouvelles règles de la vie sociale,” in *Histoire du christianisme: des origines à nos jours*, vol. 2: *Naissance d'une chrétienté (250-430)*, ed. Charles and Luce Pietri (Paris: Desclée, 1995), 675-717. That Christianity more or less dissolved this family centred society in favour of a community-centred one is readily visible in funerary practices. For instance, the whole community engaged in the celebration of funerals. Even more significant are the intramural burial customs, where the unit is no longer the family (as in the great mausoleums of the Roman aristocratic families), but various members of the community are buried next to one another. See Ann Marie Yasin, “Funerary Monuments and Collective Identity: From Roman Family to Christian Community,” *ArtB* 87, no. 3 (2005): 441-451 (case study on North-African burial basilicas).

¹³ See, e.g., the essays collected in Johan Leemans et al., eds., *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity*, AKG 119 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011).

¹⁴ Schäferdiek, “Die Anfänge,” 298; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 49.

¹⁵ See the analysis of P. Laurence, “Les Moniales de l'aristocratie: Grandeur et humilité,” *VigChr* 51 (1997): 140-157.

These issues were reflected at all levels of Christian life, leading to a shift in discourse that can be summarized as “re-appropriating” or “re-making” the past.¹⁶ The result was an age of prolific literary activity that attempted to Christianize history, to construct models of the past for the benefit of the present – through, e.g., sermons, biographies, but also texts about martyrs.

The present work focuses on this last genre, the martyr-narratives and their role in the transition to a new discourse.¹⁷ After Christianity had been declared *religio licita*, one was no longer in need to be prepared for dying for Christ’s sake. What to do then with the traditions developed around the memory of the martyrs, the primary aim of which had been to prepare for the prospect of martyrdom?¹⁸ Instead of relegating them to the status of “tales” about past heroes, Christianity “recycled” them and their universe of expression to create another pillar for its identity – another tool to define it over against larger cultural identities in the Empire.

This identity-formative function of martyr-texts is closely connected with the development of the cult of martyrs.¹⁹ From earliest times the martyrs were given special honours: Christians made efforts to collect their bodies and provide them a decent burial in specially appointed places. There the entire community gathered every year on the day of their death, to sing hymns and psalms, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to have a meal for the benefit of the needy.²⁰ With the recognition of Christianity as *religio licita*, when secrecy and discretion were no longer imperative, these special honours grew into veritable festivals dedicated to the martyrs, the so-called *panegyreis*. The more popular the martyr, the more sumptuous his / her anniversary festival got. Shrines, *martyria*, were built above their tombs or their relics were removed from the graves and buried in the proximity / under the altar of newly built basilicas (depositions and translations).²¹

This devotion flowed from the belief that through the act of martyrdom, one achieved communion with Christ. Such communion endured in eternity, and so

¹⁶ Averil Cameron, “Remaking the Past,” in *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, ed. Glen W. Bowersock, Peter Brown and Oleg Grabar (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1-20.

¹⁷ On the different modern scholarly approaches to this prolific genre, see the essay of Susan Ashbrook Harvey, “Martyr Passions and Hagiography,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 603-627.

¹⁸ For the preparation for martyrdom as an aim of early hagiographic texts, see Everett Ferguson, “Early Christian Martyrdom and Civil Disobedience,” *J ECS* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 77 (with examples at 77n27).

¹⁹ Cameron, “Remaking the Past,” 7-8.

²⁰ Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1912), 29-60; De Gaiffier, “Réflexions,” 15; Johan Leemans, General Introduction to ‘*Let us die that we may live*’: *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (c. AD 350-AD 450)*, ed. Johan Leemans et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 15-22.

²¹ The *martyria* are, alongside church buildings, the primary *locus* for a specifically Christian art. For martyr-shrines and their art in general, see André Grabar, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique*, 2 vols. (London: Variorum Reprints, 1972).

martyrs were soon seen as intercessors between humans and God.²² In that sense, martyrs were not just heroes of the past: Through their relics, they sanctified places and people. Their merits in martyrdom extended as blessings over the community that cared for their relics and celebrated their *panegyris*.²³

The martyrs and saints became during the fourth century public figures.²⁴ The martyr-cult in general was a privileged occasion to “catechize” new converts (especially from a polytheistic background), and to (re-)assess the grounds which bound together the local Christian community. It also became a repository of the worries and the hopes of faithful, who sought proximity to the martyr even after death. The practice of burial next to the martyrs (*inhumatio ad martyres*) shows that faithful believed they could offer assistance for their salvation at the moment of the resurrection.²⁵ And so their cult and the practices and traditions associated to it became yet another, twofold, identity-marker: They distinguished Christianity from other religious cults; and they distinguished local Christian communities from one another.²⁶

The cult of the martyrs determined a widespread interest in the stories of the martyrs, seen as foundational events. Whence the care to carefully collect and immortalize them in writing and in art. The community of faithful was time and again reminded of these foundational stories through the decorations in the *martyria*.²⁷ The story of the martyr’s arrest, trial, and death was read and commented upon every year at the celebration of his / her *dies natalis* – the *panegyris*.²⁸ This, in turn, generated a flourishing hagiographic activity starting with the fourth century.

Practical reasons stood partially behind this flourishing: The liturgy of the martyr-cult demanded that those venerated be provided with the account of their death. Responsible for the task of narrating the story of martyrs must have been authoritative persons, the bishop himself or persons whom he delegated, since it was

²² On the cult of the martyrs, see the foundational work of Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, HLHR.NS 2 (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981); and the essays published in Paul Anthony Hayward and James D. Howard-Johnston, eds., *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²³ Johan Leemans, “Celebrating the Martyrs: Early Christian Liturgy and the Martyr Cult in Fourth Century Cappadocia and Pontus,” *QL* 82 (2001): 249, 252; Leemans, “General Introduction,” 21; Cameron, “Remaking the Past,” 8.

²⁴ Harvey, “Martyr Passions,” 603.

²⁵ On *inhumatio ad martyres*, see Yvette Duval, *Auprès des saints corps et âme: L’inhumation «ad sanctos» dans la chrétienté d’Orient et d’Occident du III^e au VII^e siècle*, Collection des Etudes Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité 121 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1988).

²⁶ Harvey, “Martyr Passions,” 607.

²⁷ Of the artwork that must have adorned *martyria*, Asterius of Amasea and Gregory of Nyssa described beautiful examples: Asterius of Amasea, *Ecphrasis in Euphemiam* (ed. Datema, 153-155); Gregory of Nyssa, *In Theodorum* (ed. Heil, Cavarinos, and Lendle, 62-63).

²⁸ On the educational function of these elements, see Johan Leemans, “‘Schoolrooms for our souls.’ Homilies and Visual Representations: The Cult of the Martyrs as a Locus for Religious Education in Late Antiquity,” in *The Challenge of the Visual in the History of Education*, ed. Mate Depaepe and Bregt Henkens, *Paedagogica Historica* 36, no 1 (2000), 113-127.

imperative that the narrative be received and appropriated by the entire community.²⁹ But the hagiographic discourse of the fourth and the fifth centuries had a hidden agenda, too. Taking advantage of the centrality of martyrs in the life of the community, its discourse often sought to facilitate a better appropriation of certain dogmatic or disciplinary tenets of the ever-developing Christian teaching. Thus, these martyr-narratives also represented widely circulating texts which, like the Scriptures, informed the cultural memory of their Christian audience. As Bauduin de Gaiffier aptly formulated, "(...) les Actes des martyrs étaient souvent lus dans les assemblées chrétiennes; envoyés d'une communauté à l'autre, ils circulaient de mains en mains et se fixaient dans les mémoires."³⁰

Hagiographic texts of the fourth and the fifth century largely took the form of *passiones*, relatively short narrations concentrating on the events surrounding the martyrdom of their protagonists.³¹ In that, they tended to embrace the same basic structure. An introduction delineated the chronological setting: which persecution claimed the protagonist(s) as its (their) victim, offering also a short portrait of the martyr (with due mention, where appropriate, of ecclesiastical function), and presenting the manner of his / her arrest. Next, the body of the text narrated the interrogations by the persecuting officials, their attempts to convince the martyr to deny Christ, and the tortures he / she endured. The extent of the tortures varied from one text to another, depending on the aspects prioritized by each hagiographer. Finally, the concluding paragraphs spoke about the martyr's last actions (final prayer, exhortation of the onlookers, etc.) and his / her manner of death. An additional paragraph may detail the burial of the martyr's corpse. The texts usually ended with indications of the day of martyrdom and a doxology.

This basic, conventional, framework allowed for variations, depending on the skill and taste of the hagiographer: Literary embellishments could be added, but differences can be observed also in the treatment of Scripture or the use of typical narrative traditions (miracle accounts, stories of conversion). In spite of the more or less elaborate literary-rhetorical expression, the martyr-texts of the fourth and the fifth century often had a historical kernel around which the narrative developed.³²

²⁹ With few exceptions (all late), the hagiographers who redacted this type of martyr-stories remained anonymous (contrary to famous authors of *vitae sanctorum*). This is perhaps due to the fact that the hagiographer wrote the story of the martyr in the name of the Christian community: As Susan Ashbrook Harvey noted, the act of writing hagiography is a collective act, since the hagiographer is limited to a certain extent by the expectations of the community, but the community participates also by receiving and appropriating the story. See Harvey, "Martyr Passions," 617.

³⁰ Baudouin de Gaiffier, review of *Studi agiografici*, by Manlio Simonetti, *AnBoll* 75 (1956): 425.

³¹ On the various genres of hagiographic literature, see Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, 2nd ed., SHG 13B (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1966); René Aigrain, *L'hagiographie: ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*, 2nd ed., SHG 80 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 2000), 121-194.

³² For the historical relevance of hagiographic texts and the late antique hagiographic production, see, i.a., the monograph of Timothy D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, TrC 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Especially the hagiographies related to the Great Persecution had to be written in such a way as to reconcile still fresh memories about the martyrs and the stories people expected to hear about them. These hagiographic texts had to contain some historically reliable information, at least in terms of name, date, and manner of death.

The theological content of these hagiographic texts is mostly visible in the narrative of the court trials. Here, too, several stock-motifs appear in almost every *passio*, largely taken over from earlier narratives. The mechanisms of cultural and religious memory informed this process as well. In order to describe situations of suffering and death for the sake of Christ, hagiographers appealed to earlier examples, well-embedded in the conscience of their audience.³³

The fundamental motif of the theology unfolded in hagiographic texts is the *imitatio Christi*, in its various aspects.³⁴ Through their public confession and their painful death, but also through their conduct during the trial, the martyrs share in Christ's suffering and death.³⁵ This brings them to communion with Christ, who speaks and suffers himself through the martyrs.³⁶ Two widespread *topoi* flow from the idea of the imitation of Christ. Firstly, martyrdom represents a fight against the devil and its demons, acting through officials conducting the trials.³⁷ This perception of martyrdom as a contest, a cosmic struggle and victory over the devil is expressed in rich agonistic imagery. Secondly, martyrdom is a sacrifice to God,³⁸ even a re-iteration of Christ's sacrifice.³⁹

Other stock-motifs recurrent in hagiographic literature are martyrdom seen as mission⁴⁰ and assurance for the resurrection. Both are catechetical-propagandistic aspects: The missionary side of martyrdom consisted in offering to the audience models worthy of imitation. And, with the unfolding of the cult of the martyrs, the transition from *imitatio Christi* to *imitatio martyrum* was easily made. To the new converts, hardly at ease with the idea of a bodily resurrection, examples of martyrs who already gained eternal life in God's company served as a much needed confirmation.⁴¹

³³ De Gaiffier, review of *Studi agiografici*, 425: "De même que le texte de la Bible était cité presque involontairement, de même les rédacteurs, pour décrire des situations analogues, employaient des expressions qui reposaient dans l'inconscient de leurs souvenirs."

³⁴ For the different expressions of *imitatio Christi*, see, among others, Michele Pellegrino, "L'imitation du Christ dans les Actes des Martyrs," *VS* 98 (1958): 38-54; Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁵ E.g., *Mart. Apollonii* 47 (ed. Musurillo, 102.22-25); *Pass. Fructuosi* 7.2 (ed. Musurillo, 184.7-12).

³⁶ E.g., *Mart. Perpetuae* 15.6 (ed. Musurillo, 122.30-124.1).

³⁷ See, e.g., *Mart. Carpi* 17 (ed. Musurillo, 24.12-17); *Pass. Mariani* 2.2 (ed. Musurillo, 196.1-3); *Pass. Crispinae* 1.7 (ed. Musurillo, 304.8-10). Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom," 75.

³⁸ E.g., *Mart. Dasii* 5.2 (ed. Musurillo, 274.32-34); *Pass. Felicis* 30 (ed. Musurillo, 270.6-7); *Mart. Cononis* 6.7 (ed. Musurillo, 192.9-10).

³⁹ The foundational texts in this regard are Ignatius of Antioch, *Ep. ad Romanos* 2.2; *Mart. Polycarpi* 14 (ed. Musurillo, 12.28-29). See De Gaiffier, "Réflexions," 17-18.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, "Early Christian Martyrdom," 76.

⁴¹ E.g., *Mart. Polycarpi* 18 (ed. Musurillo, 16.14-15); *Mart. Pionii* 21.4 (ed. Musurillo, 164.2-3). De Gaiffier, "Réflexions," 21-22.

Especially after Christianity “triumphed” over the empire (with the edict of toleration of 313 AD), martyrdom was also perceived as a grace, given by God only to select Christians, who proved themselves worthy through their way of life.⁴² According to this view, one had to “earn” the possibility of martyrdom. God’s providential arrangement of circumstances that made the event possible was most often expressed in the providential arrest of the martyr or by the martyrs themselves in their (final) prayers.⁴³ The theology of martyrdom as a special reward for a truly Christian life, may have initially served also as a reaction against the so-called “voluntary” martyrdom, in the attempt to curtail the heedless rushing to self-denouncement – especially since many of these “voluntary” martyrs ended up apostatising.⁴⁴ In later ages, however, it served to highlight the special status enjoyed by the martyrs.

Related to the providential supervision of martyrdom is the topic of flight from persecution. Far from representing a shameful practice, flight from persecution was regarded as a legitimate action: The Scriptures advised it and presented it as compatible with *imitatio Christi*. The martyr did nothing more than obeying Christ’s commandments,⁴⁵ especially as formulated in Mt 10:23, “When they persecute you in one city, flee to another.”⁴⁶ Of course, this legitimation was agreeable only because in the *passiones* those who sought first escape from persecution ended up doing the right thing. When the right moment (arranged by God) presented itself, they eventually embraced martyrdom. This is another stock-motif to emphasise the martyr’s special calling in that he / she was chosen by God to undergo martyrdom.

As this short and rather schematic presentation hints, if we consider hagiographic texts as literary-theological writings used in well-defined (often liturgical) settings, they carry a theological programme informed by two fronts: On one hand, by what their target-audience expected (the expectations of the local community which celebrated the cult); and on the other hand, by what their redactor expected from the respective target-audience (their finality beyond the martyr-cult).

⁴² Ferguson, “Early Christian Martyrdom,” 75-77.

⁴³ See, e.g., *Mart. Polycarpi* 14 (ed. Musurillo, 12.29-30); *Mart. Carpi* 4.1 (ed. Musurillo, 32.13); *Mart. Perpetuae* 21.11 (ed. Musurillo 130.17); *Pass. Mariani* 2.3 (ed. Musurillo, 196.4-5).

⁴⁴ On Patristic attitudes to voluntary martyrdom, see the chapter “Voluntary Martyrdom in the Early Church” in Geoffrey E.M. de Ste Croix, *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom and Orthodoxy*, ed. Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 153-200; Christel Butterweck, *Martyriumssucht in der alten Kirche? Studien zur Darstellung und Deutung frühchristlicher Martyrien*, BHT 87 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 153-200.

⁴⁵ E.g., *Mart. Polycarpi* 5 (ed. Musurillo, 4.28-6.1); *Mart. Agapis, Eirenis et Chionis* 1.3 (ed. Musurillo, 280.15-20). Oliver Nicholson, “Flight from Persecution as Imitation of Christ: Lactantius’ Divine Institutes IV. 18, 1-2,” *JThS* 40, no.1 (1989): 48-65; Johan Leemans, “The Idea of ‘Flight for Persecution’ in the Alexandrian Tradition from Clement to Athanasius,” in *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition. Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, ed. L. Perrone with P. Bernardino and D. Marchini, vol. 1, BETL 164 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 901-910.

⁴⁶ On the reception history of this verse, see Martin Künzi, *Das Naherwartungslogion Matthäus 10,23: Geschichte seiner Auslegung*, BGBE 9 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970).

In spite of the relatively homogeneous structure and universe of expression that denotes the genre of *passiones*, the pen of a skilled hagiographer produced under their guise efficient catechetical and propagandistic instruments. These, in turn, contributed to the definition of Christianity at large, and often to the definition of certain communities over against others.⁴⁷ It is this line of research that I shall follow in relation to late antique Pannonian hagiography.

1. PANNONIAN HAGIOGRAPHY: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, STATE OF THE ART

Several reasons prompted my focus on the hagiography of late antique Pannonia. Firstly, important secular and ecclesiastical events unfolded on the scene of the Pannonian provinces during the later Roman empire. Secondly, archaeological and historical examination revealed the social and doctrinal complexity of Christian communities in Roman Pannonia. Thirdly, the hagiographies of Pannonian martyrs represent the main literary source for the history of these communities during the late fourth and the early fifth centuries.⁴⁸ And finally, in spite of their importance, these texts remained, until quite recently, largely understudied.

The Pannonian provinces, especially Pannonia Secunda, with its capital Sirmium, were a hot-spot of secular and ecclesiastical history in the period concerned here (fourth and early fifth century). Diocletian had re-organized the Roman province of Pannonia into four units: Pannonia Prima, Savia, Valeria and Pannonia Secunda, with the capitals at Savaria (today Szombathely, Hungary), Siscia (modern Sisak, Croatia), Aquincum (Budapest, Hungary) and Sirmium (today Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia), respectively.⁴⁹ The four provinces, although separate administrative units, represented a closely-knit region of the central diocese of Illyricum.

This exceptional status denoted the strategic importance of the late Roman Pannonias, situated on the border of the Western and Eastern halves of the Roman Empire. Virtually all land-routes, but also some water-routes connecting the two parts of the empire coursed through the Pannonian provinces.⁵⁰ The north-eastern border, from Carnuntum (today Petronell-Carnuntum, Austria) to Singidunum (Belgrade, Serbia) coincided with the *limes* of the empire on the Middle Danube. As

⁴⁷ Harvey, "Martyr Passions," 605-607 and 614-617.

⁴⁸ Apart from this hagiographic production, but a handful of literary sources survived the ages: the *Altercatio Heracliani* (CPL 687; ed. Caspari, 133-147); two letters of Germinius, bishop of Sirmium, which survived among the fragments of Hilary of Poitiers: *Fragm.* A.III.5 and B.VI.7 (ed. Feder, 47-48 and 160-164); alongside indirect references in several works of Hilary and Athanasius of Alexandria (on the Arian controversy). The reconstruction of Pannonian Christian history depends largely on external sources (from other parts of the empire), corroborated with archaeological and epigraphic evidence *in situ*.

⁴⁹ Jenő Fitz, *L'administration des provinces pannoniennes sous le Bas-Empire romain*, Latomus 181 (Brussels: Latomus, 1983), 14-15; András Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia: A History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire* (London and Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 273.

⁵⁰ See Andrew F. Burghardt, "The Origin of the Road and City Network of Roman Pannonia," *Journal of Historical Geography* 5, no. 1 (1979): 1-20; Endre Tóth, *Itineraria Pannonica: Római utak a Dunántúlon* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2006).

barbarian populations constantly pressured this *limes* in their move westwards, the strategic and political role of Pannonia progressively increased. The barbarian threat often demanded the deployment of substantial military resources and the presence of the emperors themselves. As a consequence, Sirmium was raised to the status of imperial residence, on a par with Rome, Milan and Trier. Starting with the Constantinian dynasty, either the imperial court or the highest administrative apparatuses kept constant vigil in Pannonia and on its Danubian *limes*.

Still, in 374 AD, a multiethnic barbarian group managed to break the Roman defensive system, and pillaged the land.⁵¹ Among others, Mursa (today Osijek in Croatia) was destroyed.⁵² In 381 AD, Gratian finally settled them as *foederati* in the Northern Pannonian provinces (Valeria, and, to a lesser degree, Prima).⁵³ Upon Theodosius' death, the settlers broke their *foedus* (395 AD), and before they were engulfed in larger migrating units, the Pannoniae went through several more years of ransacking. This was but a precedent to the successive waves of migrants that settled for shorter or longer periods in Pannonia and in other regions of Illyricum, from where they conducted campaigns in the Western provinces, Italy and Gaul. The final blow was dealt by the Hunnic invasions of mid-fifth century. Justinian's attempt to restore part of Pannonia in the sixth century was short-lived, and the Avar conquest put a definitive end to Roman Pannonia.

The settling of barbarian groups in Illyricum caused in the long run demographic displacements. Many of the Roman inhabitants fled towards safer regions of the Empire, principally to Italy, but also to Gaul and Greece. A law in the *Codex Theodosianus*, issued to the praetorian prefect Theodorus in December 408, points to the gravity of the situation. The law referenced "numerous groups of inhabitants" of Illyricum who sought "foreign residence."⁵⁴ The prefect was tasked with taking steps to protect the civic status of these refugees. The Hunnic invasions exacerbated in the following decades this flux of immigrants from Illyricum. Eventually, much of the Roman administration and the endowed classes from Noricum were evacuated in the 480s AD. Something similar can be assumed for Pannonia too. At any rate, in Pannonia and Dalmatia larger cities were abandoned, and the remaining fraction of the population retreated either to the mountains or to

⁵¹ László Barkóczy, "History of Pannonia," in *The Archaeology of Roman Pannonia*, ed. A. Lengyel and G.T.B. Radan (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 115.

⁵² Letter of Maximus to Valentinian II (386/7 AD), in *Coll. Auellana* 39.4 (ed. Guenther, 88-89).

⁵³ László Várady, *Das letzte Jahrhundert Pannoniens* (Amsterdam and Budapest: Gemeinschaftsausgabe des Verlages Adolf M. Hakkert and Akadémiai Kiadó, 1969), 377; Barkóczy, "History," 118; Friedrich Lotter, Rajko Bratož and Helmut Castritius, *Völkerverschiebungen im Ostalpen-Mitteldonau-Raum zwischen Antike und Mittelalter (375-600)*, RGA.E 39 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2003), 81-99.

⁵⁴ *Codex Theodosianus* 10.10.25 (the 10th of December 408 AD): "Idem AA. ad Theodorum praefectum praetorio. Cum per Illyrici partes barbaricus speraretur incursus, numerosa incolarum manus sedes quaesivit externas, in cuius ingenuitatem adsidua petitorum solet libido grassari eique illicite iugum servitutis imponere. Igitur praescriptum tua sublimitas recognoscat, ut Illyricianos omnes, quos patria complectitur vel alia quaelibet terra suscepit, petere non liceat. Dat. IIII Id. decemb. Ravennae, Basso et Philippo cons." See also *Codex Theodosianus* 5.7.5 and *Constitutiones Sirmondianae* 16.

better protected areas.⁵⁵ Although nothing points to a systematic evacuation, one can safely assume that at least some inhabitants took the path to safer parts of the empire.

The Christian history of late antique Pannonia is no less dynamic. The presence of the court and high administrative apparatus in various centres of the province (Siscia, Savaria, Sirmium) and its *limes* (e.g., Carnuntum) attracted a growing number of Christian converts. This is especially true of the Valentinian dynasty and thereafter. In practice, we may surmise that local ecclesiastical authorities had to cope with the challenge of accommodating and training these converts to a properly Christian lifestyle.

The Christological and Trinitarian controversies did not elude Pannonia either. Once again, the focal point in this period was Sirmium, but other episcopal sees (such as Mursa) participated in the Arian crisis. Secular circumstances requiring imperial presence offered the local ecclesiastical elite access to the emperor. This was particularly important during the reign of Constantius II (337-361 AD), who attempted several times to bring order to the chaos. Yet, his sympathy to the Arian solution, could not quell the Nicene opposition. Illyricum, and Pannonia at its centre, became the cauldron of Nicene and anti-Nicene debates in the West.⁵⁶

Tradition has it that in mid-fourth century two Pannonian bishops, Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa, both Arians, wrapped Constantius II under their influence.⁵⁷ To them one can add later Germinius of Sirmium, whose theological orientation evolved nonetheless towards a reconciliatory *via media*.⁵⁸ It seems that at least in these centres Christians had split in Nicene and Arian factions, if not even parallel communities.⁵⁹ But archaeological excavations unearthed evidence of Arian sympathies in Pannonia Prima as well.⁶⁰ The already complex doctrinal and ecclesiastical situation was further complicated when Photinus,⁶¹ a new heresiarch, was made bishop of Sirmium.

⁵⁵ Rajko Bratož, "Il cristianesimo in Slovenia nella tarda antichità: Un abbozzo storico," *ASIA.NS* 29-30 (1981-1982): 39-40.

⁵⁶ An overview can be consulted in Hanson, *The Search*, 315-347; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 122-166.

⁵⁷ Hanson, *The Search*, 591-592.

⁵⁸ Hanson, *The Search*, 592-594; Daniel H. Williams, "Another Exception to later 4th-century 'Arian' typologies: The Case of Germinius of Sirmium," *J ECS* 4, no. 3 (1996): 335-357.

⁵⁹ Branka Migotti, *Evidence for Christianity in Roman Southern Pannonia (Northern Croatia): A Catalogue of Finds and Sites*, BAR International Series 684 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 1997), 5; Mirja Jarak, "The History of the Early Christian Communities in Continental Croatia," in *Od nepobjedivog sunca do sunca pravde: Rano kršćanstvo u kontinentalnoj Hrvatskoj – From the Invincible Sun to the Sun of Justice: Early Christianity in Continental Croatia*, ed. Branka Migotti (Zagreb: Arheološki Muzej, 1994), 173-175. Such archaeological finds, albeit attesting Arian presences, are too limited in number and importance to posit on their basis the existence of parallel communities.

⁶⁰ Edith B. Thomas, "Arius-Darstellung, eine römische Ziegelritzzeichnung aus Kisdorog in Pannonien," *Annales Musei Szekszárdiensis de Béri Balogh Ádám nominati – A Szekszárdi Béri Balogh Ádám Múzeum Évkönyve* 4-5 (1973-1974): 77-116.

⁶¹ Daniel H. Williams, "Monarchianism and Photinus of Sirmium as the Persistent Heretical Face of the Fourth Century," *HThR* 99, no. 2 (2006): 187-206.

The personalities mentioned above played key-roles in the evolution of the Christological and Trinitarian crisis of the fourth century. Throughout the 340s and 350s AD several synods held at Sirmium attempted to settle the doctrinal divergences of the West (351, 357, 358, 359 AD). Orchestrated mostly by Homoeans (second-generation Arians), and seeking ways to reach a compromise solution, they were met with the stout opposition of the Nicenes.⁶² The disturbed waters of Pannonian Christianity started to calm only in 376, when Ambrose of Milan managed, with the tacit support of Gratian, to install a Nicene bishop, Anemius, at Sirmium.⁶³ This doctrinal complexity represented yet another challenge for the local communities in their quest for self-definition.

The fall of the *limes* in the later fourth century and the successive invasions starting with the fifth century left their mark on Pannonian Christians, too. We find them seeking refuge in other parts of the empire,⁶⁴ taking the relics of their martyrs along. Their cult resurfaced in Italy (Aquileia, Ravenna, even Rome), Gaul, or Greece (Thessalonike), and many of them were progressively naturalised to their new homeland.

It should also be noted that Roman Pannonia was throughout its history a cosmopolitan region, with high demographic dynamics. Its inhabitants belonged to various cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.⁶⁵ In such conditions, the pagan presence was a serious challenge for a Church already struggling with internal disputes. Moreover, the proximity of the court, of imperial bureaucracy, of army troops drawn from various regions of the empire, must have contributed to this diversity with a steady flow of newcomers and their dependants.

As outlined above, Pannonian Christianity faced a series of threats to its internal cohesion, from the pagan presence through the doctrinal quest to converts who chose Christianity out of interest rather than conviction. It is in this context that Pannonian hagiography took shape, as the only substantial literary expression of Pannonian Christianity. In the chapters that follow, I shall show how these threats were indirectly reflected in hagiographic narratives. I shall also comment on the strategies used by Pannonian hagiographers in their attempt to offer solutions or, at least, incline their audiences to certain directions / dispositions. Such strategies

⁶² Hanson, *The Search*, 325-329, 343-347, 357-370; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 134-140, 152; Thomas Graumann, "Theologische Diskussion und Entscheidung auf Synoden: Verfahrensformen und -erwartungen," in *Die Synoden im Trinitarischen Streit: Über die Etablierung eines synodalen Verfahrens und die Probleme seiner Anwendung im 4. und 5. Jahrhundert*, ed. Uta Heil and Annette von Stockhausen, TU 177 (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2017), 56-66; and Uta Heil, "Was wir glauben und was wir wissen: Zur Bilanz des trinitarischen Streits durch die Homöer," in Heil and Von Stockhausen, *Die Synoden*, 208-217.

⁶³ Hanson, *The Search*, 592, 595. On Ambrose's role in the ordination of Anemius, see Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 11 (ed. Pellegrino, 64.1-66.14).

⁶⁴ An analysis on the problems they created for the bishop of Aquileia, Chromatius, can be found in Rajko Bratož, "La Chiesa aquileiese e l'Illirico Occidentale al tempo di Cromazio," in *Chromatius of Aquileia and His Age: Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Aquileia, 22-24 May 2008*, ed. Pier Franco Beatrice and Alessio Peršič, IPM 57 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 103-143.

⁶⁵ Péter Kovács, "Christianity and the Greek Language in Pannonia," *ActaAnthHung* 43 (2003): 113-120.

include advice on proper Christian conduct, heated anti-pagan polemics, allusions to doctrinal tenets, imagining the bishop as guarantee for the right faith and internal cohesion of the community. For now, however, I proceed to introduce these sources.

Subject to Galerius during the Great Persecution, the provinces of Pannonia distinguished themselves by the martyrdom of many Christian men and women. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, the standard source for the cult of the martyrs in Late Antiquity, appears very well informed on Pannonian martyrs. Several dozen had been inscribed in its lists, out of which hagiographic critique granted authenticity to the following entries:

| date | name | place of death / cult |
|-------------|---|-----------------------|
| 23 February | Syneros (Serenus) | Sirmium |
| 26 March | Montanus, presbyter in Singidunum and his wife Maxima | Sirmium |
| 6 April | Irenaeus, bishop | Sirmium |
| 9 April | Demetrius, deacon | Sirmium |
| | Fortunatus and Donatus, deacons | Sirmium |
| | seven anonymous virgins | Sirmium |
| 28 April | Eusebius, bishop | Cibalae |
| | Pollio, lector | Cibalae |
| 4 June | Quirinus, bishop of Siscia | Savaria |
| 4 July | Sabbatia | Sirmium |
| 15 July | Agrippinus and Secundus | Sirmium |
| 14 August | Ursicinus | Sirmium |
| 29 August | Basilla | Sirmium |
| 8 November | Four Crowned Martyrs | Sirmium |
| 25 December | Anastasia | Sirmium |

The list of the *Hieronymianum* is visibly dominated by Sirmium in Pannonia Secunda. Archaeological discoveries, however, confirm that martyr cults developed in other towns, such as Sopianae (modern Pécs, Hungary), Mursa, Brigetio (modern Komárom, Hungary) or Aquincum.⁶⁶ More difficult is to ascertain the identity of the martyrs venerated in these places. In the absence of epigraphic confirmation, they remain, to date, unknown.

Some of the known martyrs received written hagiographic stories in the form of ten *passiones*: These are:

⁶⁶ For an overview of the evidence related to the martyr-cult in Pannonia, see Rajko Bratož, “Verzeichnis der Opfer der Christenverfolgungen in den Donau- und Balkanprovinzen,” in *Diokletian und die Tetrarchie: Aspekte einer Zeitenwende*, ed. Alexander Demandt, Andreas Goltz and Heinrich Schlange-Schöningen, Millenium-Studien zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr. 1 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2004), 212-225.

Passio Quirini (BHL 7035-7039)
Passio Irenaei Sirmiensis (BHL 4466; BHG 948-451)
Passio Pollionis (BHL 6869)
Passio Sereni (BHL 7595-7596)
Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis (BHL 2309)
Passio Quattuor Coronatorum (BHL 1966)
Passio Anastasiae (BHL 400-401)
Passio Erasmi (BHL 2578-2582)
Passio Demetrii (BHL 2122-2127)
Passio Ursicini (BHG 1861)

Especially the first five texts⁶⁷ fit well in the overall hagiographic landscape of Late Antiquity, sharing the specific features of the genre of *passiones* as presented above. They denote similarities in structure, literary-theological universe, stock-motifs (*imitatio Christi*, interpretations of martyrdom as providential event, sacrifice, mission, guarantee of resurrection, etc.), both amongst each other and in relation to other late antique *passiones*. In other words, they are typical hagiographic texts, susceptible of conveying similar messages through similar textual-narrative procedures and of influencing the formation of (a local) Christian identity. The present volume examines in depth these five *passiones*.

The scholarly significance of this hagiographic corpus as reflecting the history of Early Christianity in Pannonia was slow to emerge. The first hagiographic dossiers and much-needed critical editions appeared only at the very end of the twentieth century. In 1999, François Dolbeau published the edition of the Latin *Passio Irenaei* (the Greek has no critical edition).⁶⁸ Paolo Chiesa's critical edition of the *Passio Quirini* appeared only in 2013.⁶⁹ More recently, I ventured to present the dossiers of Pollio

⁶⁷ Research on the second half is complicated by the intricate history of relic translations and the new traditions these brought to life. For example, the relics of Demetrius were transferred to Thessalonike, where the local piety, forgetting the Pannonian origin of the saint, imagined him another tradition. Posterity remembers Demetrius as the famous soldier-martyr of Thessalonike, and it is precisely in the latter role that he is celebrated in the *passio*. Anastasia, the Four Crowned Martyrs or Ursicinus suffered the same fate: The relics of Anastasia and the Four Crowned were deposited in Rome, whereas Ursicinus' relics found a resting place in Ravenna. In all these cases, souvenirs of the saints' Pannonian origins can be traced in their *passiones*; but the *passiones* themselves record the last station in their appropriation by the places where their relics rested or their cult flourished. See Péter Tóth, "Sirmian Martyrs in Exile: Pannonian Case-Studies and a Re-Evaluation of the St. Demetrius Problem," *ByZ* 103 (2010): 145-170; Efthymios Rizos, "Martyrs from the North-Western Balkans in the Byzantine Ecclesiastical Tradition: Patterns and Mechanisms of Cult Transfer," in *Grenzübergänge: Spättrömisch, frühchristlich, frühbyzantinisch als Kategorien der historisch-archäologischen Forschung an der mittleren Donau – Late Roman, Early Christian, Early Byzantine as Categories in Historical-Archaeological Research on the Middle Danube*, ed. Ivan Bugarski et al., *Forschungen zu Spätantike und Mittelalter* 4 (Remshalden: Verlag Bernhard Albert Grenier, 2016), 195-213.

⁶⁸ François Dolbeau, "Le dossier hagiographique d'Irénée, évêque de Sirmium," *AnTard* 7 (1999): 205-214.

⁶⁹ Paolo Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," in *Le Passioni dei martiri Aquileiesi e Istriani*, ed. Emanuela Colombi, vol. 2/1, *Fonti per la Storia della Chiesa in Friuli – Istituto Pio Paschini. Serie medievale* 14 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2013), 501-583.

(2012) and Syneros (2020).⁷⁰ Prior to the publication of these editions, scholarship relied on textual versions of poor quality. With the notable exception of the *Passio Irenaei* and, to a certain extent, of the *Passio Pollionis*, even the most recent studies were based on seventeenth and eighteenth century editions published by the Bollandists and by Thierry Ruinart.⁷¹

One example suffices to show how these editions can lead to inaccurate research results. The *Passio Sereni* published in the ActaSS styles the martyr “monachus,” whereas another version, published by Ruinart presents a longer text in which the martyr is simply “Graecus ciuis.” Scholars held that the two editions correspond to two distinct recensions, and then debated much on the relationship between the two, on one hand, and their relation to other martyrological sources on Syneros, on the other hand. The analysis of the *passio*’s textual transmission, however, revealed that it was transmitted in a single recension. The printed editions represent in fact two shortened versions (independently of one another) of this same recension. Moreover, “monachus” is a late interpolation, inserted in the text under the influence of medieval martyrological traditions. Plainly stated, Serenus *monachus* is the invention of medieval martyrologists.⁷²

These textual shortcomings naturally affected research results. The majority of scholarly works dealing with Pannonian hagiography strived to assess the historical relevance of the given text, be it for the history of the Great Persecution or for the history of Late Roman Pannonia. The few general (critical) overviews posit wider theories confirmed / demonstrated starting from the texts.

When Albert Dufourq discussed the Pannonian *passiones*, it was to illustrate his theory of a fifth – sixth century revision programme of existing hagiographic texts.⁷³ Similarly, Rudolf Egger’s presentation of Pannonian hagiography supported his view that the *Passio Hermagorae* had a Pannonian model.⁷⁴ The hagiographic outline of the history of the Great Persecution was treated by Svetozar Ritig, Jacques Zeiller and Mirja Jarak.⁷⁵ Ultimately, scholars hold fast to the idea that Pannonian hagiography offers reliable information on the history of the Great Persecution because there are

⁷⁰ Hajnalka Tamas, “*Passio Pollionis* (BHL 6869): Introduction, Critical Text, and Notes,” *SE* 51 (2012): 9-34; Hajnalka Tamas, “The Hagiographic Dossier of Syneros (Serenus) of Sirmium, Gardener and Martyr (BHL 7595-7596),” *SE* 59 (2020): 83-115.

⁷¹ The Bollandist editions are contained in the afferent volumes of the ActaSS. For Ruinart, see *Acta primorum martyrum sincera et selecta*, ed. Theodoricus Ruinart (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859).

⁷² For a detailed discussion, see Tamas, “The Hagiographic Dossier,” 87-91.

⁷³ Albert Dufourq, *Etude sur les Gesta martyrum Romains*, vol. 2, BEFAR 83 (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1907).

⁷⁴ Rudolf Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras: Eine kritische Untersuchung* (Klagenfurt: Verlag Ferd. Kleinmayr, 1948).

⁷⁵ Svetozar Ritig, “Martirologij srijemsko-pannonske metropolije,” *Bogoslovska Smotra* 2, no. 4 (1911): 353-371; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l’Empire Romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), 68-104; Mirja Jarak, “Martyres Pannoniae: The Chronological Position of the Pannonian Martyrs in the Course of Diocletian’s Persecution,” in *Westillyricum und Nordostitalien in der spätrömischen Zeit*, ed. Rajko Bratož, Situla 34 (Ljubljana: Narodni Muzej Slovenije, 1996): 263-287; Jarak, “The History,” 158-172.

few other sources for this period of Christian history in Roman Pannonia. We simply do not know anything of the early fourth century events other than what these texts tell us. At a critical examination, however, the value of their information is greatly diminished, as we shall see in each chapter.⁷⁶ It took until the last decade for the first critical historical evaluations to appear in the works of Rajko Bratož, Péter Kovács and Levente Nagy.⁷⁷ These were the first attempts to properly contextualize the surviving Pannonian *passiones*. Nagy's work deserves further attention as a study that tries to highlight the relevance of Pannonian hagiography for the socio-cultural history of late Roman Pannonia. His more accurate assessment is limited, though, by the textual versions he used.

Apart from these more encompassing studies, a handful of articles focus on particular texts. Henrik Hildebrandt briefly addressed the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Quattuor Coronatorum*.⁷⁸ Manlio Simonetti wrote literary-critical studies on the *Passio Quirini*, the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*, in which he attempted to show that all these texts are patchworks of hagiographic stock-motifs. He also argued that their extant versions are Latin translations of (now lost) Greek originals.⁷⁹ Cecilia Roncaioli attempted to gather and analyze the sources referring to the translation of Quirinus' relics to Rome, offering thus a good starting-point for the hagiographic

⁷⁶ The historical core is certainly present. As I mentioned in the introductory remarks above, the martyr's name, the date, place, and manner of his / her martyrdom must have been too fresh in the collective memory to be tampered with. Yet, through the focus on this aspect, scholarship on Pannonian hagiography exaggerated its historical reliability, trying to extract more historical information than the *passiones* themselves could deliver.

⁷⁷ Rajko Bratož, "Die diokletianische Christenverfolgung in den Donau- und Balkanprovinzen," in Demandt, Goltz und Schlange-Schöningen, *Diokletian*, 115-140; Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 209-251; Petrus Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae antiquae in aetate Tetrarcharum I (A. D. 285-305)*, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae* 6 (Budapest: Pytheas, 2011); Levente Nagy, *Pannóniai városok, mártírok, ereklyék: Négy szenvedéstörténet helyszínei nyomán – Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia: Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories*, *Thesaurus Historiae Ecclesiasticae in Universitate Quinqueecclesiensi* 1 (Pécs: Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, 2012); Hajnalka Tamas, "Eloquia divina populis legere: Bible, Apologetics and Asceticism in the *Passio Pollionis*," in *Christian Martyrdom in Late Antiquity (300-450 AD): History and Discourse, Tradition and Religious Identity*, ed. Peter Gemeinhardt and Johan Leemans, AKG 116 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012), 179-198; Hajnalka Tamas, "Scio unum Deum vivum et verum, qui est trinus et unus Deus: The Relevance of Creedal Elements in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*," in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011*, vol. 63/11: *Biblica, Philosophica, Theologica, Ethica*, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven, Paris and Walpole, MA: Peeters 2013), 243-257; Levente Nagy, "Ascetic Christianity in Pannonian Martyr Stories?," in *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-8th Centuries)*, ed. Marianne Sághy and Edward M. Schoolman, CEU Medievalia (Budapest: CEU Press, 2017), 97-104.

⁷⁸ Henrik Hildebrandt, "Early Christianity in Roman Pannonia – Facts among Fiction?," in *Studia Patristica: Papers Presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2003*, vol. 39: *Historica, Biblica, Ascetica et Hagiographica*, ed. Frances M. Young, Mark J. Edwards and Paul M. Parvis (Leuven, Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 59-64.

⁷⁹ Manlio Simonetti, *Studi agiografici* (Rome: A. Signorelli, 1955), 55-79. Some of Simonetti's conclusions remain valid, despite inclinations to hypercriticism. Yet, his methodological focus on literary criticism alone led to insufficient allowances for the context of the analysed texts or the peculiarities of the hagiographic genre, aspects that greatly nuance research results on Pannonian hagiography. That a narrative is made up of circulating motifs in no way diminishes its value.

dossier of the Siscian bishop.⁸⁰ Finally, perhaps the best contribution in this field was authored by Danny Praet, who applied the principles of literary and narratological analysis to the *Passio Sereni*.⁸¹ Unfortunately, Praet too had to cope with the absence of a critical edition. Yet, most of his observations are valid, with the proviso that they do not exhaust the literary-narratological interpretive potential of the *Passio Sereni*.

Against this backdrop, the research presented here has a double aim. On one hand, I offer state-of-the-art hagiographic dossiers for all the martyrs studied (Quirinus, Irenaeus, Pollio, Syneros, Donatus and companions). These dossiers comprehensively document late antique and early medieval sources attesting the cult of said martyrs, from martyrological notes through archaeological finds and data retrieved from itineraries to mentions in literary works. As noted, Rajko Bratož, Mirja Jarak, Levente Nagy, Péter Kovács have made efforts to elaborate a survey of the sources related to the cult of Pannonian martyrs. Yet the dossiers presented here exceed these in detail. Bratož' survey is brief, adducing quick catalogues of sources to support a hypothesis. Jarak's article, although well documented, does not delve in a critical discussion of the sources. She is interested rather in demonstrating the historical reliability of Pannonian martyr-narratives. Nagy chose only a few *passiones*, and he focused more on the historical-archaeological aspects. Kovács, in turn, separated the martyrological, the literary, and the epigraphic sources in three lists, understating the discussion of the first. What I propose here is a critical discussion of all the extant data about each martyr and their cult. Such discussion is liable to bring clarity to the (still) chaotic array of sources. It has the added benefit that it facilitates process of dating and contextualising the given *passio*. The resulting hagiographic dossiers can also be viewed as research tools in their own right.

On the other hand, I strive to do justice to the socio-cultural and literary-theological potential inherent in the five selected *passiones*. As writings composed for the use of a specific (local) Christian community, they tell us about the beliefs, problems, lifestyle of that community. Thus, these hagiographic narratives document the history and the religious, social and cultural world-view of the period in which their extant form was composed, and even beyond. Through their liturgical usage in the celebration of the martyr's cult, they played an important role in the formation of Christian collective memory. Their imaginative universe was more appealing to the common believer. They had etiological and formative functions, presenting in the person of the martyr *exempla* to be imitated. As told therein, the lives, the beliefs and the behaviour of the martyrs became standards against which individual and communal Christian identities were measured.

⁸⁰ Cecilia Roncaioli, "S. Quirino di Siscia e la sua traslazione a Roma: Analisi e critica delle fonti," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Lingua e Letteratura Latina* 2-3 (1980-1981): 215-249.

⁸¹ Danny Praet, "Susanna, the Fathers and the *Passio Sereni* (BHL 7595-6): Sexual Morals, Intertextuality and Early Christian Self-Definition," *ZAC* 14, no. 3 (2010): 556-580.

2. DELIMITATION OF CONTENTS

As shown in the previous section, Pannonia-related hagiography is much richer than the five narratives covered in the chapters of this book. I must, then, explain why I limited my study to this material only.

Several criteria concurred in selecting the hagiographies analysed here.

Firstly, I focus only on the Latin *passiones* of a relatively early date. Thus, later (sixth century) as well as Greek *passiones* fall outside the scope of my study. Such are the *Passio Quattuor Coronatorum*, the Greek version of the *Passio Irenaei*, the Greek *Passio Ursicini*, but also the late *Passio Demetrii*. Being a borderline province, passed back and forth between the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman empire, Pannonia used both Greek and Latin. Nonetheless, when one looks at the Christian epigraphic production in Late Antiquity, the percentage of Latin inscriptions, especially the inscriptions related to the martyr-cult, is overwhelming, with barely a few Greek counterparts.⁸² Thus, in the second half of the fourth century and in early fifth century – the period which concerns this study –, Latin was most likely *the* language of Christians in Pannonia.⁸³

Secondly, these hagiographies focus on members of Pannonian Christian communities. Four of the five *passiones* describe the martyrdom of local clergymen (*Passio Quirini*, *Passio Irenaei*, *Passio Pollionis* and *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*). The *Passio Sereni* is the only one dedicated to a layperson, but here too it clearly states that Syneros was indeed a member of the Sirmian community. Related to this second criterion is the necessity to have, for each martyr, a demonstrable cult (place of cult) in Pannonia itself. This is very important for my research question: Since the *passiones* were read during the liturgies associated to the martyr-cult, the activities and practices related to the cult were the primary means of transmitting the message of the *passio* and, implicitly, of enabling its identity-formative functions. Archaeological finds confirm the cult in three of the five cases (vestiges of *martyria*, inscriptions). Where this is not possible (Quirinus, Donatus and companions), I considered that indications of the late antique martyrologies suffice to prove that their cult had indeed been observed: According to the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, Quirinus, although bishop of Siscia, was celebrated in Savaria; and Donatus, in Sirmium.

Thirdly, the five hagiographies were demonstrably composed in Pannonia itself (*Passio Quirini*, *Passio Irenaei*, *Passio Pollionis*, *Passio Sereni*) or directly linked, at textual level, to Pannonian hagiographic production (*Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, textually dependent on *Passio Pollionis*). The *Passio Anastasiae*,

⁸² The Greek inscriptions have been collected by Péter Kovács, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum Pannonicarum*, 3rd ed., Hungarian Polis Studies – PAN 15 (Debrecen and Budapest: Verano, 2007).

⁸³ One has to admit, however, that the Latin spoken then and there presented certain Greek influences.

composed in Rome (albeit closer in date to the hagiographies studied here),⁸⁴ and the late and legendary *Passio Erasmi* were not included because they do not respect this criterion. Since I was intent on tracing, to the extent it was possible, the formation of a local identity, it seemed more interesting to follow the efforts of local hagiographers to form and, where necessary, to correct the self-perception of their fellow Christians. This gives us an insight into the daily agenda of both the redactors of the *passiones* and those who were at the receiving end of their discourse.⁸⁵

Two further reasons prompted me to include in this group the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. This text offers an insight into the reception of the hagiography of Pollio. Moreover, if my assessment on the circumstances in which it had been written (fifth century Aquileia) is correct, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* reacts, by invoking the example of Pannonian martyrs, to doctrinal and pastoral problems generated by the presence of heterodox immigrants from Pannonia and Illyricum. In that sense, it offers a good opportunity to observe Pannonian Christian identity after the settlement of barbarians in the province.

As for the other four hagiographies (*Passio Quirini*, *Passio Irenaei*, *Passio Pollionis* and *Passio Sereni*), one has the feeling one unfolds a veritable, almost intentional, hagiographic production. The contours of this identity-formative project are shaped by the different aspects prioritised by each text.⁸⁶

3. STRUCTURE

This book contains five chapters, corresponding to the five hagiographies selected for analysis. Each chapter is structured in three parts: The first presents the hagiographic dossier of the given saint / group of saints. The second introduces the respective hagiography (*passio*), offering a preliminary analysis, followed by the Latin text and English translation. The third and final section proceeds to an in-depth analysis of the given *passio*, which approaches the text from the perspective of different methodologies.

The hagiographic dossier constitutes the primary means by which one can ascertain that a given martyr had been honoured with a cult. It also indicates the popularity of that cult at a given time (in this case, Late Antiquity), and in a certain geographic area. Since the hagiographic dossier is a specific research tool, it seems opportune to clarify its elements in the remainder of this section.

⁸⁴ Paola F. Moretti, ed., *La Passio Anastasiae: Introduzione, testo critico, traduzione*, Studi e Testi Tardoantichi 3 (Rome: Herder, 2006).

⁸⁵ The so-called “target-audience.”

⁸⁶ This conscious effort was sensed also by Hildebrandt, “Early Christianity,” 59, who suggested that the *Passio Irenaei* might have been part of a hagiographic collection. Late antique Pannonian hagiography does have a certain intentionality and functionality of its own, but not one that could be traced back to a single model-text.

I. The hagiographic dossier represents the collection and critical evaluation of all extant sources that help the scholar in reconstructing the hagiographic “coordinates” of a martyr:⁸⁷ Name, place and date of martyrdom, deposition and translation of the relics.

The most extensively used sources in this category are the so-called “martyrologies,” especially the late antique ones (*Breviarium Syriacum*, *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*). Welcome attestations can be derived also from archaeological and epigraphic finds or from medieval itineraries composed for pilgrims. These sources will appear in every chapter and bear great weight in the discussion of the martyrs’ cult.

1. Martyrologies, late antique and medieval, are lists presenting the anniversaries of saints arranged in the order of the calendar (by month and day). The fundamental condition for inclusion is that the martyrs have an acknowledged, annually celebrated cult.⁸⁸ Martyrologies contain notes on martyrs and confessors, canonized saints of the Church (bishops, ascetics, patrons, etc.), but also anniversaries related to the ordination of bishops, dedication of sanctuaries or the deposition and translation of relics. The notes themselves may vary in length and content: Indicating the name and place of veneration is indispensable.⁸⁹ But the martyrologist could write a more detailed note, even a full-fledged eulogy that summarised the saint’s life, the place and manner of his/her death, the persecutors to whom he / she fell victim, etc..⁹⁰

The oldest extant martyrology is the *Martyrologium Syriacum*. In its extant form, it is an early fifth century Syriac excerpt of a much larger and much older Greek original. It contains a calendar, a list of Occidental and Oriental martyrs (whose feasts are listed, on occasion, on different dates for different locations), and a separate list with members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Greek original must have been composed c.a. 360 AD in Nicomedia.⁹¹

The oldest Latin martyrology, at the same time the most complex from text-historical point of view, is the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. Of universal aspirations, this martyrology sought to reunite local calendars, martyrologies, lists of saints, episcopal *fasti*, etc., from the entire Roman world. It is based on the African calendar, the Roman traditions and the oriental, Greek, martyrology that served as

⁸⁷ The method of hagiographic critique focusing on “hagiographic coordinates” (“coordonnés hagiographiques”) was first elaborated by Hippolyte Delehaye, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1934).

⁸⁸ Henri Quentin, *Les martyrologes historiques du Moyen Age: Etude sur la formation du Martyrologe Romain*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie Victor Lecoffre, 1908), 1; Jacques Dubois, *Les martyrologes du Moyen Age Latin*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 13.

⁸⁹ Jacques Dubois and Jean-Loup Lemaître, *Sources et méthodes de l'hagiographie médiévale* (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 103.

⁹⁰ Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 11.

⁹¹ Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 23-25.

model for the *Martyrologium Syriacum*. Its original probably goes back to fifth century Aquileia. In the sixth century it was completely revised and expanded in the region of Auxerre, on which occasion a group of additional notes on Gallic saints was added.⁹²

The *Hieronymianum* soon became the standard “universal” martyrology, meaning that it was continuously copied, excerpted, augmented well into the Middle Ages (up to the tenth century).⁹³ Its editors discerned two main families: The first is extant in one manuscript, copied in England in mid-sixth century, later preserved in the monastery of Echternach (*codex Epternacensis*). The representative manuscript of the second family is preserved in Bern (*codex Bernensis*). It was copied for a monastery near Metz in the course of the eighth century. A group apart in the second family, the “sub-family of Fontenelle,” is represented by a manuscript held at the library of Wissembourg (*codex Wissenburgensis*).⁹⁴ It seems that almost each copyist had troubles reading the abbreviations of the previous versions, for the martyrology is characterized by frequent misspellings, distortions, changes of date, transformation of topographic names into personal names, gender confusions, etc.⁹⁵ My discussion of Pannonian martyrs abundantly illustrates these aspects. For this reason, it is important, when using the martyrology, to cite and compare the variants of all three principal manuscripts: the *Bernensis*, which is the version adopted by the critical editors of the *Hieronymianum*; the *Epternacensis*; and the *Wissenburgensis*.

There are two standard critical editions of the *Hieronymianum*, both published in the ActaSS. The first was elaborated by Giovanni Battista de Rossi and Louis Duchesne,⁹⁶ the second by Henri Quentin.⁹⁷ I used the first edition, and respected the abbreviation style of the editors when citing its variants (Bern., Eptern., Wissen.). The only comprehensive commentary trying to sort out the chaos of the *Hieronymianum* belongs to Hippolyte Delehaye.⁹⁸ The Bollandist scholar showcased his vast experience in evaluating hagiographic texts and traditions, and created a masterpiece of hagiographic critique still relevant today, although recent, more informed research corrected some of his assumptions.⁹⁹

⁹² Dubois and Lemaître, *Sources*, 106-107.

⁹³ See the inventory of manuscripts in *Martyrologium Hieronymianum ad fidem codicum, adiectis prolegomenis*, ed. Ioh. Bapt. De Rossi et Ludov. Duchesne, ActaSS Novembris, vol. 2/1 (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1894), VII-XXXVIII.

⁹⁴ Dubois and Lemaître, *Sources*, 107; Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 33-43.

⁹⁵ Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 44-47.

⁹⁶ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne).

⁹⁷ Hippolyte Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus in martyrologium Hieronymianum ad recensionem Henrici Quentin O.S.B.*, ActaSS Novembris, vol. 2/2 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1931).

⁹⁸ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*.

⁹⁹ A relevant example is the critique of Cecilia Roncaioli on Delehaye's affirmations concerning the Roman cult of saint Quirinus. Cf. chapter I.1.3 below, and Roncaioli, “S. Quirino,” 226-227.

The *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*¹⁰⁰ represents for the Greek world what the *Hieronymianum* represents for the Latin world. Similarly to the *Hieronymianum*, the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* is a collection of eulogies. As the expression of the official cult of saints in the Byzantine world, the synaxary is based on a variety of calendars and liturgical texts referring to the celebration of saints.¹⁰¹ It too is extant in various recensions, ranging from the tenth to the thirteenth century, each incomplete, and each to be corrected according to others.¹⁰² Repetitions, displacements of dates, name confusions characterise this martyrology too.¹⁰³

In the Latin West, the work of martyrologists did not stop with copying the *Hieronymianum*. A series of so-called “historical martyrologies” emerged from the eighth century onwards. In contrast to the *Hieronymianum*, their compilers sought not just to note names and places, but to give more detailed accounts of the saints’ personal history.

In the first half of the eighth century, Venerable Bede laid the foundations for later “historical” martyrologies. The Pannonian martyrs made their debut with Bede’s continuator, the anonymous martyrologist of Lyon, who wrote at the end of the eighth century.¹⁰⁴ Among his sources we find the *Hieronymianum* in a recension close to Eptern., *acta* and *passiones*, etc. This martyrology is extant in one manuscript, dated to the first half of the ninth century.¹⁰⁵

Still in the early ninth century, Florus of Lyon completed the lacunae of the anonymous martyrology with data retrieved from literary sources. He wrote two versions of his martyrology, the first in the first quarter of the ninth century, the second between 825 and 840 AD.¹⁰⁶ Florus’ martyrology is extant in several manuscripts, which showcase Florus’ later interventions.¹⁰⁷ Both recensions contain the same amount of notes on Pannonian martyrs.¹⁰⁸

In the second half of the ninth century, Ado, archbishop of Vienne, also tried his hand at writing a martyrology. His work was published in three stages: The first two belong to Ado with certainty, and were completed before 865. The last might be the work of Ado, but it is also possible that one of his close continuators took over the project.¹⁰⁹ Since the first recension is no longer extant, Ado’s martyrology is known in

¹⁰⁰ *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano, nunc Berolinensi, adiectis synaxariis selectis*, ed. Hippolyte Delehaye, ActaSS Novembris, Propylaeum (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1902).

¹⁰¹ Aigrain, *L’hagiographie*, 72-73. Delehaye, prolegomena to *Synaxarium*, LIX-LXXVI.

¹⁰² For the manuscripts containing the synaxary, see Delehaye, prolegomena to *Synaxarium*, VI-LX.

¹⁰³ Aigrain, *L’hagiographie*, 80-83.

¹⁰⁴ Dubois and Lemaître, *Sources*, 111, are of the opinion that it was composed before 806.

¹⁰⁵ Aigrain, *L’hagiographie*, 56; Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 131-221.

¹⁰⁶ Dubois and Lemaître, *Sources*, 111-112.

¹⁰⁷ Aigrain, *L’hagiographie*, 57-59.

¹⁰⁸ A comparative edition of the martyrologies of Beda Venerabilis, Anonymus Lugdunensis and Florus can be consulted in Jacques Dubois and Geneviève Renaud, eds., *Edition pratique des martyrologes de Bède, de l’Anonyme Lyonnais et de Florus* (Paris: CNRS, 1976).

¹⁰⁹ Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 465-681.

two recensions.¹¹⁰ Ado added several names to Florus' martyrology. In composing his eulogies, he used also *passionaria*, collections of martyr-narratives and lives of saints.¹¹¹

The last grand medieval martyrologist is the late ninth-century Usuard, a monk at Saint-Germain-des-Prés. At the request of Charles the Bald to organize the solemnities of saints, Usuard intervened on the first recension of Ado at several levels: He shortened the too long summaries and introduced ca. 370 new entries based largely on the *Hieronymianum*, leaving no empty days.¹¹² Usuard's text was re-copied several times, even in printed form. Its popularity was so large that the *Martyrologium Romanum*¹¹³ adopted it as a starting point.

2. A second category of sources which lend information on the medieval cult of Pannonian martyrs, this time beyond the confines of Pannonia, is formed by medieval Roman itineraries. Conceived as pilgrim-guides of the eternal city, itineraries catalogue the tombs of notable martyrs across Roman cemeteries, within and outside the city walls, in topographic succession. Pannonian martyrs, notably Pollio and Quirinus, feature in four such itineraries: *Notula oleorum*; *De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae*, *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*, and *Itinerarium Malmesburiense*.

The first three date from the seventh century. The *Itinerarium Malmesburiense* is known only through a twelfth century copy, but its original goes back to a much earlier period.¹¹⁴ The most precious document in this category remains the itinerary of Salzburg, *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*. As the title suggests, it is a minute description of the Christian sanctuaries in Rome. Whereas the other itineraries mention the cemeteries and enumerate the saints buried there, the *Notitia ecclesiarum* structures its material with additional topographic indications (starting with intra-mural cemeteries), in the most complete way known to date.¹¹⁵ For this reason, I cite first the *Notitia ecclesiarum* when presenting notes on Pannonian martyrs, and refer to the other itineraries only if they contain relevant variants.

3. Needless to say, the sources presented above do not suffice to reconstruct the hagiographic dossier, especially when their information is chaotic at worst, conflicting at best. In this sense, artefacts pertaining to material culture verify well

¹¹⁰ See their description in Jacques Dubois and Geneviève Renaud, eds., *Le martyrologe d'Adon: Ses deux familles, ses trois recensions* (Paris: CNRS, 1984), II-XXXII.

¹¹¹ Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 60-62.

¹¹² Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 62-65. Edition in *Le martyrologe d'Usuard: Texte et commentaire*, ed. Jacques Dubois, SHG 40 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965).

¹¹³ Edition in *Martyrologium Romanum*, ed. Cuthbert Johnson and Anthony Ward, BELS 97 (Rome: CLV, 1998).

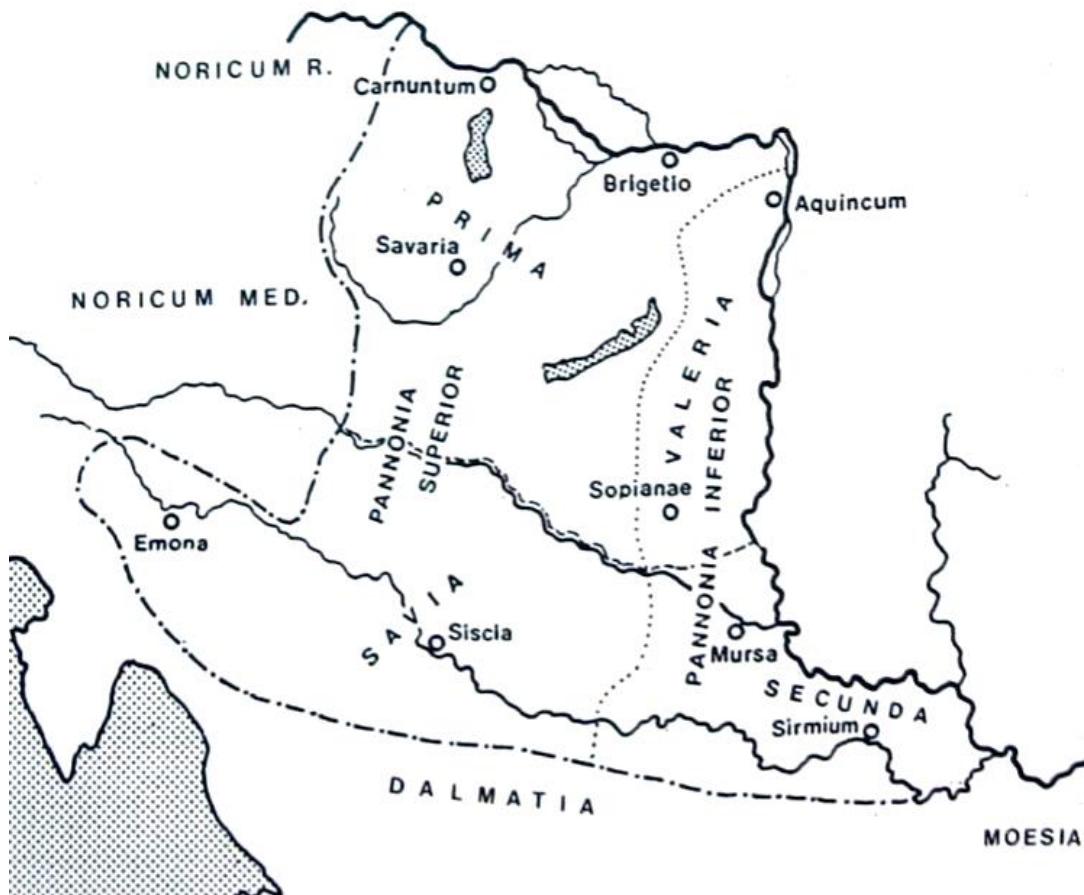
¹¹⁴ Giovanni Battista De Rossi, *La Roma sotterranea cristiana*, vol. 2 (Rome: Salviucci, 1877), 178-185.

¹¹⁵ Pasquale Testini, *Archeologia cristiana: Nozioni generali dalle origini alla fine del sec. VI; propedeutica – topografia cimiteriale; epigrafia – edifici di culto* (Rome: Editori Pontifici, 1958), 27.

the martyrological and literary allusions to late antique martyr cults in Pannonia. These can be remnants of monumental architecture, reliquaries, or inscriptions. The latter are of special interest, since they attest with certainty that a building had indeed been consecrated to a given martyr. This is the case of Irenaeus and Syneros. Where epigraphic finds do not elucidate the dedication, correspondences between existing architectural vestiges and indications in the *passio* can point to a cultic centre. Excavations brought to light an architectural complex that coincides with the place where Pollio was martyred according to the *passio*: This probably was a *locus* of Pollio's cult.

II. Each hagiographic dossier is followed by the text of the *passio* and an English translation. I reproduce here the text established in the latest critical editions, accompanied by an apparatus of Scriptural references and of hagiographic and literary parallels. The English translations are either entirely mine, or adaptations of existing translations (e.g., for the *Passio Irenaei*). The reader will also find a list of past editions and translations in modern languages.

III. The final section of each chapter deals with the interpretation of the *passiones*, in line with the second major goal of the present book. The studies that complement the hagiographic dossiers seek to show how the repertoire of hagiographic themes, *topoi*, and strategies influenced the formation of a Christian identity in its local clothing. I use a contextual-comparative approach, literary, theological, and audience-oriented analysis to identify the background, the aims, and the implications of these hagiographic writings for the local and wider Christian dynamics. This endeavour is likely to reveal the social and devotional diversity of Pannonian communities, alongside pressing issues which marked the later fourth century from a pastoral perspective. Some of the topics I discuss refer to mechanisms of coping with mass conversions, reinventing the martyr-discourse, defining what a Christian should believe and do (orthodoxy and orthopraxis, respectively).



Map of Pannonia in the late Roman period (after Migotti, 1997)

..... Borders in the time of Traian

----- Borders in the time of Diocletian

4. CHRONOLOGY OF PANNONIAN HISTORY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

- 343 council of Serdica: Photinus appointed bishop of Sirmium
- 345 – 347 unsuccessful attempts to excommunicate Photinus
- 351 the first council of Sirmium: Photinus deposed; Germinius
elected bishop of Sirmium
- 357 the second council of Sirmium
- 358 the third council of Sirmium
- 359 the “Dated” creed of Sirmium
- 374 the Quadi breach the *limes* on the Danube
- 375 Valentinian I dies while waging war against the Quadi
- 376 Gratian stops at Sirmium while marching to meet Valens;
the battle of Adrianople against the Goths is a disaster;
the *limes* on the Lower Danube is open to barbarians (Goths,
Huns, Alans)
- 378 Anemius is elected bishop of Sirmium
Alatheus attacks Pannonia; barbarian groups are settled in
Valeria and Pannonia Secunda
- 381 these groups are re-settled in Pannonia Savia
- 397 Alaric, *magister militum per Illyricum*, settles in Pannonia
- 401-2 Alaric’s first invasion in Italy
- 405-6 Radagaisus’ Goths raid Northern Italy
- 409-10 Alaric’s second invasion of Italy and the sack of Rome

CHAPTER I

Quirinus of Siscia (BHL 7035-7039)

1. HAGIOGRAPHIC DOSSIER

Quirinus, bishop of Siscia (modern Sisak, Croatia), with the focal point of his cult in Savaria (today Szombathely, Hungary) is perhaps the most famous Pannonian martyr. From late antique and medieval martyrologies we learn that his feast-day was the 4th of June; the year of his martyrdom remains uncertain. His relics were translated to Aquileia, and perhaps (partially?) to Rome in the basilica of San Sebastiano on the Via Appia. Literary sources attest his popularity in Late Antiquity: His martyrdom is celebrated by Jerome, Prudentius, Venantius Fortunatus, and Gregory of Tours. Quirinus' late antique prestige is exceptionally confirmed by the complex relation between the extant *Passio Quirini* and Jerome's note and Prudentius' poem, respectively. This correlation sets the *passio* on more solid ground than the rest of Pannonian hagiography.

Yet, any attempt to establish the elements of Quirinus' dossier must face several challenges. For instance, hagiographic traditions surrounding Quirinus' martyrdom introduce three towns which could, arguably, dispute the role of cultic centres: Siscia, Savaria and Scarbantia. What role did these towns play in the events of Quirinus' martyrdom and in his cult? When were the relics translated from Pannonia to Italy?¹ Discrepancies between data retrieved, on one hand, from the *Passio Quirini* and from literary sources, on the other hand, from martyrological, historiographic and archaeological sources account for most of the intricacies of the dossier. In the introduction to the critical edition of the *Passio Quirini*, Paolo Chiesa overviewed comprehensively these sources and questions.² In the following pages, I shall present each of them and offer some variations on Chiesa's conclusions.

¹ Both questions have been treated extensively with a critical eye by Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 215-249.

² Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 505-536.

1.1. *Passio Quirini*

In this section I discuss the *Passio Quirini* as a documentary source relevant to the hagiographic dossier. In this sense, it is opportune to summarise the text from the viewpoint of the information it contributes. First, however, it should be mentioned that Paolo Chiesa identified two extant redactions of the *Passio Quirini*: an older “recensio Romana,” and a “recensio Aquileiensis” that contains several changes with respect to the archetype. I shall present their characteristic features in the following sub-chapter (I.2). Here I note only aspects of their relationship which bear on elements of the hagiographic dossier.

The introduction carefully delineates the framework of the persecution: We are told that Quirinus’ arrest, trial and martyrdom were a consequence of Diocletian’s edicts ordering the closure of Christian churches and the compliance of the Christian clergy with traditional Roman religion, lest they be tortured and executed. It was under this edict that the *praeses* or the *iuridicus* Maximus ordered the arrest of Quirinus, bishop of Siscia. Quirinus was caught while fleeing the city and brought in for questioning. A vivid dialogue ensued, in which Maximus’ questions offered as many incentives for Quirinus to develop his beliefs and theological views. Maximus tried to persuade Quirinus to offer sacrifice in various ways: He pleaded, offered reward in money and honour, he threatened, had Quirinus tortured and imprisoned – but nothing prevailed. On the contrary, while imprisoned, Quirinus managed to convert and even baptise Marcellus, the prison ward. Three days later, seeing that he could not induce the bishop to renounce Christ, Maximus sent him to Amantius, the governor (“*praeses*”) of Pannonia Prima, to be tried again and sentenced. Amantius’s own attempt in Savaria to set right the “folly” of the bishop was met with the same obstinate refusal. Therefore, the governor decided to make Quirinus’ sentence an exemplary one, which would terrify all Christians: The bishop was to die by drowning with a millstone tied to his neck. Miraculously, however, Quirinus remained afloat, which prompted him to further exhort and encourage the onlookers. Only after he prayed to be granted martyrdom did Quirinus drown. The similarities of this passage with notes on Quirinus’ martyrdom in ancient literary sources warrant its quotation in full:

[Amantius] iussit sancto Dei sacerdoti uel famulo molam ad collum ligari, et in fluuii Sabari undas demergi. Cumque de ponte praecipitatus fuisset in fluuium et diutissime supernataret, cum spectantibus collocutus est ne suo terrentur exemplo, uix orans ut mergeretur obtinuit.³

Significant is that the Aquileian recension omits the name of the river, which the Roman recension indicates as “fluuium Sabari(s).” The Roman recension has a

³ *Pass. Quir.*, rec. Romana, VII.2.

longer conclusion: It states that Quirinus' body was found afloat at a short distance, and the place marked by a chapel. His body was buried in the basilica near the Scarbantian gate. These indications, which place Quirinus' martyrdom in Savaria, are absent from the Aquileian recension. It seems that the latter contains, in this case, the older reading.⁴ At any rate, scholarship debates whether Quirinus' martyrdom took place in Savaria.

Moreover, certain manuscripts of the Roman recension contain two further annotations ("addictiones") concerning the fate of Quirinus' relics. The first marks their translation to Rome, to the San Sebastiano catacombs on the Via Appia (in the mausoleum called Platonía). It states that the pious Christians of Scarbantia took the relics with them when they were fleeing from barbarian incursions in Pannonia. The second records the translation to Santa Maria in Trastevere by pope Innocent II. Both annotations serve to delineate the centres where Quirinus' cult flourished:

Facta autem incursione barbarorum in partes Pannoniae, populus christianus de Scarabetensi urbe Romam fugiens, sanctum corpus beati Quirini episcopi et martyris auferentes secum duxerunt. Quem uia Appia miliario tertio sepelierunt in basilica apostolorum, ubi corpora principum apostolorum aliquando iacuerunt [id est Petri et Pauli], ubi et sanctus Sebastianus martyr requiescit, in loco qui dicitur Catacumbas, aedificantes nomini eius dignam ecclesiam, ubi praestantur beneficia eius usque in hodiernum diem.⁵

Ibique uenerabile corpus eius diu latuit. Sed Spiritu Sancto disponente, qui non patitur sanctorum suorum gloriam occultari, tempore Innocentii II papae ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae Transtiberim fundentis oleum fundatoris, quando eadem ecclesia fabricabatur, eodem Spiritu Sancto inspirante, consilio et mandato eiusdem pontificis ac totius Romanae Ecclesiae, clerici Sanctae Mariae cum magna reuerentia leuauerunt pretiosissimum corpus gloriosissimi Quirini episcopi et martyris de eodem loco. Quod cum timore Dei detulerunt in praedictam ecclesiam Sanctae Mariae Transtiberim ac cum hymnis et orationibus in maiori altari eiusdem ecclesiae recondiderunt. Vbi praestantur beneficia eius usque in hodiernum diem.⁶

From this account, we can deduce the following:

Firstly, while Siscia was the episcopal see of Quirinus, one recension of the *Passio Quirini* considered that he was martyred at Savaria. The Aquileian recension does not indicate the place of martyrdom. Moreover, the note on Quirinus' death differs stylistically from rest of the *passio*: As Chiesa observed, its fast-paced, elegantly worded presentation sets it apart from the slow and laborious narration in the body of the text, especially in the dialogical parts.⁷ The note also forsakes the geographical coherence from the trial section, which provided minute and accurate topographic indications.

⁴ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 522.

⁵ *Pass. Quir.*, rec. Romana, VIII.1-2.

⁶ Vatican, BAV, Vat.lat. 1191, f. 3r, cited in the *apparatus criticus* of Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 573. This is the only copy to contain the second *addictio*.

⁷ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 510.

It is entirely possible that the note on Quirinus' death was penned later and attached to the narration of the trials. At least, in the form attested by the Roman recension, it seeks to reconcile other, conflicting, late antique sources: Jerome's *Chronicon* and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*: The first mentions Quirinus only as bishop of Siscia; the latter gives Savaria as the place of Quirinus' martyrdom.⁸ As Chiesa stated, the note on Quirinus' death complies with genre expectations, "un protocollo agiografico abituale" which requires that the place of execution, the manner of death, as well as information on subsequent burial and cult be indicated. A scribe altogether unfamiliar with Pannonian topography could have made creative use of the locations mentioned in the trial section: Savaria and Scarbantia.⁹

Nonetheless, from the *Passio Quirini* as a whole it transpires that at least three Pannonian communities had a claim on connections with the martyr: Siscia, where he had been bishop, Savaria, where he was brought to court a second time, and Scarbantia, one of the stations during his journey in Pannonia Prima. If the *locus natalis* is difficult to discern, a cult dedicated to Quirinus in all these locations can be safely presumed. This diffuse cult could stand at the origin of the conflicting indications in late antique sources.

Secondly, the *Passio Quirini* renders quite faithfully the course of the persecution unleashed by Diocletian. It mentions both Galerius and Diocletian as *augusti*, suggesting that Quirinus must have died at the latest in 305 AD.

Thirdly, a specifically Roman tradition commemorates the deposition of Quirinus' relics in Savaria, and their translation to Rome. Interestingly, however, the agents of this translation are the inhabitants of Scarbantia, and not Savaria. The annotations represent three successive layers: The note on the burial probably served as reference for whoever composed the first translation note. This person mistook the "Scarbantian gate" to refer to the town of Scarbantia. He thus assumed that Quirinus' relics rested originally in Scarbantia and, by extension, that the inhabitants of Scarbantia were the ones who salvaged Quirinus' relics. The earliest witness of the note dates from the ninth century, but the tradition might be older, since it may contain a marginal gloss, "id est Petri et Pauli," transferred into the main text in the course of copying.¹⁰ In any case, this geographic confusion – which proceeds from the *Passio Quirini* rather than from historical fact – diminishes the value of this note in ascertaining the historicity of Quirinus' Roman translation.

Once the tradition of the Roman translation took hold, the relics deposited in the catacombs on Via Appia were attributed to Quirinus of Siscia. The compiler of the second translation note, attested only in Vat.lat. 1191, took it for granted. This witness is connected to the basilica Santa Maria in Trastevere, where Quirinus' cult

⁸ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 517-523. For further discussion of these sources, see below.

⁹ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 523.

¹⁰ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 512, 552.

flourished for some time. Such a connection explains the prominent position given to the *Passio Quirini* and the care to explain how the relics ended up in that church.¹¹

1.2. Literary Sources

As we have seen from the *Passio Quirini*, hagiographic tradition connected the martyrdom of Quirinus with Savaria.¹² It is unclear whether Savaria was actually Quirinus' *locus natalis* or just a centre where his cult had taken root in Late Antiquity. Yet, the link with Savaria exists, and it explains some of the popularity Quirinus acquired in ancient literary sources.

Savaria was the birthplace of Martin of Tours. Curiosity about the origins of this prominent Christian personality must have led to interest in Quirinus and his cult, too. As a result Quirinus is by far the best documented Pannonian martyr in ancient literature: Jerome singled him out in his *Chronicon*; Prudentius' seventh hymn in the *Peristephanon* is dedicated to him; Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of Tours also mention his martyrdom.

Chronologically speaking, we hear of Quirinus first from Jerome's *Chronicon*. Jerome indicates the year 308 AD as the date of martyrdom:

ad ann. 308: Quirinus episcopus Siscianus gloriose pro Christo interficitur: nam, manuali mola ad collum ligata, e ponte praecipitatus in flumen, diutissime supernatauit et cum spectantibus collocutus, ne sui terrentur exemplo, uix orans ut mergeretur, obtinuit.¹³

Jerome's eulogy coincides almost literally with the conclusion of the *Passio Quirini*. Regardless if it was Jerome who used the *passio* for his note or the other way around (the redactor of the *Passio* embedded Jerome's eulogy in his text), the date of the *Chronicon*, 380 AD, represents a reference point in dating this hagiographic text. As I just mentioned, the eulogy is of special interest also because this is the only Pannonian martyr referenced in the *Chronicon*. We may infer two possibilities: Either Jerome, a native of Stridon, on the border between Pannonia and Dalmatia, felt a particular connection to this martyr; or – more likely – he must have been, by then, exceptionally popular across the entire Pannonia.

The association with Martin of Tours is again relevant. Jerome's attachment to Quirinus may have been born not in Pannonia, but in Aquileia, where he pursued studies for a number of years. In Aquileia Jerome joined an ascetic circle supervised by Valerianus, the local bishop.¹⁴ A fellow participant in this circle was Chromatius, the successor of Valerianus in the episcopal see of Aquileia. Apart from good mutual

¹¹ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 503n4.

¹² *Pass. Quir.* V-VII.

¹³ Jerome, *Chronicon* ad ann. 308 (ed. Helm, 47).

¹⁴ Cf. Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 20.

relations, Valerianus created a “monasterium” for the ascetic-minded youth of Aquileia taking as cue Martin’s ascetic project in Tours. Some of the attention must have transferred to Quirinus as well, as a distinguished martyr venerated in Martin’s birthplace.

The intense relations between Aquileia and Pannonian towns along the Amber Road (Savaria, Scarbantia) could also have facilitated the import of Quirinus’ cult. Aquileia was the last station in Italy before the road entered Pannonia. Although by the fourth century the Amber Road had lost its trade function, it remained nonetheless the main land route that connected Italy to the Baltic Sea, via Pannonia Prima. It can be easily imagined that through these contacts the fame of Quirinus reached Aquileia well before his relics arrived there.

Approximately two decades later, this time in Rome, Prudentius composed a hymn in honour of this Pannonian martyr – hymn VII in his *Peristephanon*. Prudentius’ poem revolves around the last moments of Quirinus’ life: the death penalty, the bishop’s miraculous floating, his encouragements to the crowd, prayer, and death. Of course, all this is presented in characteristic Prudentian style, with legendary embellishments and rich references to Scripture. For instance, Prudentius inserted in Quirinus’ last prayer allusions to Scriptural miracles: Peter walking on water, the Jordan reversing its course.

Insignem meritis uirum
Quirinum, placitum Deo,
Vrbis moenia Sisciae,
Concessum sibi Martyrem,
Complexu patrio fouent.

Hic sub Galerio Duce,
Qui tunc Illyricos sinus
Urgebat ditionibus
Fertur Catholicam fidem
Illustrasse per exitum.

Non illum gladii rigor,
Non incendia, non ferae
Crudeli interitu necant:
Sed lymphis fluuijalibus
Gurges dum rapit, abluit.

Nil refert, uitreo aequore,
An de flumine sanguinis
Tingat passio Martyrem:
Aequae gloria prouenit,
Fluctu quolibet uuida.

Summo pontis ab ardui
Sanctae plebis Episcopus
In praeceps fluuiio datur,
Suspensum laqueo gerens
Ingentis lapidem molae.

Deiectum, placidissimo
Amnis uortice suscipit
Nec mergi patitur sibi,
Miris uasta natatibus
Saxi pondera sustinens.

Spectant eminus e solo
Doctorem prauidi greges:
Nam Christi populus frequens
Riparum sinuamina
Stipato agmine sepserrat.

Sed Quirinus ut eminens
Os circumtulit; heu! suo
Exemplo trepidos uidet.
Nil ipse proprii memor
Inter stagna periculi:

Confirmat pia pectora,
Verbis mirificis rogans,
Ne quem talia terreant;
Neu constans titubet fides,
Aut poenam putet emori.

Dicentem fluitantibus
Amnis terga uehant uadis;
Nec substrata profunditas
Saxoque, et laqueo, et uiro,
Audet sponte dehiscere.

Sensit Martyr Episcopus,
Iam partem sibi praeripi
Palmae mortis et exitus,
Ascensumque negaret
Aeterni ad solium Patris.

Jesu cunctipotens, ait,
Haudquaquam tibi gloria
Haec est insolita aut noua,
Calcere et fremitum maris,
Prona et flumina sistere.

Scimus discipulum Petrum,
Cum uestigia tingeret
Mortali trepidus pede,
Dextrae subsidio tuae
Subiecisse salum solo.

Iordanem quoque nouimus
Totis uorticibus uagum,
Dum fertur rapido impetu,
Ad fontem refluus retro
Confugisse meatibus.

Haec miracula sunt tuae
Virtutis, Domine, ut modo
Suspendat, leue praenans
Summo gurgite fluminis,
Cum collo scopulum traham.

Iam plenus titulus tui est
Iam uis prodita nominis,
Qua gentilis hebet stupor,
Absoluas, precor, optime,
Huius nunc animae moras.

Quid possis, probat amicus,
Qui uetat silicem, liquor.
Hoc iam quod superest, cedo,
Quo nil est pretiosius,
Pro te, Christe Deus, mori.

Orantem, simul halitus,
Et uox deserit et calor:
Scandit spiritus ardua:
Fit pondus graue saxum;
Corpus suscipiunt aquae.

The hymn¹⁵ contains no new information with respect to Jerome's *Chronicon*. Prudentius is not aware of a possible translation of Quirinus' relics to Rome. Moreover, he indicates that the relics rested in Siscia: "Quirinum ... urbis moenia Sisciae ... complexu patrio fouent." Neither does he relate details of the court trial, a fact that sets apart *Peristephanon VII* from other poems in the collection.¹⁶ It seems Prudentius knew of Quirinus' martyrdom only through indirect sources: either Jerome's eulogy, or from an unknown martyrological that served as model for Jerome as well.¹⁷ The poet obviously took Siscia as Quirinus' *locus natalis*, and not just as the see where he had been bishop, probably because his source did not contain references to the place where the martyrdom took place. Jerome, too, simply mentions the martyrdom of "Quirinus, episcopus Siscianus," without further indications of place.

¹⁵ Prudentius, *Peristephanon VII* (ed. Cunningham, 321-324).

¹⁶ Cf. Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 521.

¹⁷ Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs*, OCM (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 237: Prudentius depends on Jerome; Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 218: Jerome, Prudentius, and Gregory of Tours transmit essentially the same information, which must have been common knowledge at the time; Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 521: both Jerome and Prudentius depend on a fourth-century martyrology that circulated in Christian intellectual circles.

Peristephanon VII is exceptional on another account: Whereas Prudentius usually ends his poems with a personal appeal,¹⁸ the hymn to Quirinus ends quite abruptly, without any personal touch. Clearly, Prudentius was not seeking Quirinus' intercessions. What prompted Prudentius to include him into a collection of poems almost exclusively dedicated to Spanish or Roman martyrs?¹⁹

Caecilia Roncaioli suggested that Prudentius was well informed on the cult of Quirinus, since he had served as *corrector* (the equivalent of governor) appointed for Savia. His residence, therefore, must have been Siscia.²⁰ This attractive conjecture cannot be proved with certainty.²¹ Prudentius did travel widely in the Eastern parts of the Roman Empire in the entourage of Theodosius, but this provides no satisfying explanation either. By all accounts, he should have had first-hand knowledge of the hagiographic traditions relative to Quirinus. Why, then, did he rely solely on Jerome?

Prudentius wrote his *Peristephanon* around 405-406 AD, after a sojourn to Rome. I believe this is an important factor in explaining why he chose to dedicate a hymn to Quirinus. Granted, Prudentius was unaware of a possible relic translation; but the fame of Quirinus might have well reached Rome by the time he visited the eternal city. Jerome himself, who, as we have seen, felt a special attachment to Quirinus, might have endeavoured to propagate his cult when residing in Rome (in the 380s AD). If Chiesa is right in presupposing an existing martyrological note as the common model for both Jerome and Prudentius, we ought to locate it also in Rome. The eternal city is the common link between the two authors. At any rate, a connection between Quirinus of Siscia and the city of Rome must have existed already in late fourth century.

A slightly altered account was penned by Gregory of Tours. In a lengthy description he lends even more stylistic embellishment to the effects of Quirinus' miraculous floating:

Eo tempore Quirinus Sisciensis ecclesiae sacerdos gloriosum pro Christi nomine martyrium tulit, quem, ligatum ad collum molare saxo, in fluminis gurgite sevitia inpulit paganorum. Igitur cum cecidisset in gurgite diu super aquas diuina uirtute ferebatur, nec sorbebant aquae, quem pondus criminis non praemebat. Quod factum admirans multitudo populi circumstantes dispecto furore gentilium, ad liberandum properant sacerdotem. Haec ille cernens, non passus est se a martyrio subtrahi, sed erectis ad caelum oculis ait: "Iesu domine, qui gloriosus resedis ad dexteram Patris, ne patiaris me ab hoc stadio remoueri, sed suscipiens animam meam, coniungere me tuis martyribus in requiae sempiterna

¹⁸ Bernard M. Peebles, *The Poet Prudentius* (New York: MacMullen, 1951), 88.

¹⁹ Apart from Quirinus, the *Peristephanon* sings the praise of two other martyrs who do not belong to the Hispano-Italian tradition: Romanus of Antioch, and Cyprian of Carthage. The cult of the latter was popular in Rome, which explains his presence amongst Prudentius' chosen martyrs.

²⁰ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 222; Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 519.

²¹ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 94.

dignare." Et his dictis reddidit spiritum. Cuius corpus a Christianis susceptum uenerabiliter sepulturae mandatum est.²²

Gregory's *Historia Francorum* focuses in general on Gallic martyrs.²³ In this case, too, Quirinus constitutes an exceptional presence, explained by his connection to Martin of Tours through Savaria. From a data perspective, this note adds little to the information transmitted by Jerome and Prudentius. However, certain details concur with the *Passio Quirini* against the two authors. Most importantly, the reference to the discovery of the relics and their "honourable" burial alludes probably to their deposition – Gregory, however, fails to mention where, making it impossible to identify which deposition he describes. But Gregory did know the *Passio Quirini*,²⁴ specifically the Aquileian recension, as its rendering of the final threat uttered by Amantius demonstrates:

(...) eris in exemplum omnibus christianis ut formam tuae mortis qui uiuere cupiunt expauescant. Deinde cum lapide molari dimergendus in gurgitem praecipitaberis.²⁵

The structure "in gurgite" corresponds with Gregory's "cecidisset in gurgite." The second phrase of this passage ("Deinde ... praecipitaberis") does not occur in the *recensio Romana*. Gregory's silence on the place where Quirinus suffered martyrdom and his dissolute reference to the deposition of relics similarly points to the Aquileian recension. It follows that by the seventh century, the hagiography of Quirinus had already crystallised in different recensions.

Finally, Venantius Fortunatus also recalled the martyrdom of the Siscian bishop in his poem on virginity. This work is greatly influenced by Prudentius, which is why, we may presume, Venantius mentioned Quirinus:

Africa Cyprianum dat, Siscia clara Quirinum.²⁶

1.3. Ancient and Medieval Martyrologies

Of late antique martyrologies, only the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* mentions Quirinus. His cult developed exclusively in the Latin West. The *Hieronymianum* inscribed Quirinus's name several times in the list of martyrs celebrated on the 4th of June:

²² Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 1.35 (ed. Krusch and Levison, 26.11-21).

²³ The observation of Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 95.

²⁴ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 95.

²⁵ *Pass. Quir.*, rec. Aquileiensis, VI.4-VII.1 (ed. Chiesa, 579).

²⁶ Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina* 8.3 (ed. Leo, 185.153).

ad 4 iun.: Niuiduno ciuitate ... Quirini ... Quirini episcopi ...
In Sabaria ciuitate Pannoniae Quirini²⁷

In the first note, Quirinus is included twice in a group of Pannonian martyrs from Noviodunum. In some manuscripts the first "Quirinus" is altered to the feminine "Quirina." Only the second Quirinus from Noviodunum is designated as a bishop. The second note places Quirinus' martyrdom in Savaria, but does not mention the episcopal office. This complicated list ends with another entry relative to Savaria (the martyrdom of Rutulus and his two companions).

Amongst the manuscripts variants, codex Bernensis received attention as potentially mentioning Quirinus' Roman deposition. In this copy, the part relative to the *locus natalis* of Quirinus (Savaria) is followed by detailed topographic indications in Rome, and a group of martyrs whose Roman veneration is debated:

ad 4. iun.: In Sabaria ciuitate Pannoniae Quirini Romae in cimiterio catacumbas Via
Appia miliario IIII sanctorum Picti Daciani Aricii diaconi.²⁸

Other copies of the *Hieronymianum* mention here only Rome and the names of the three martyrs (*Picti, Daciani, Aricii*, with several phonetic variants). Hippolyte Delehayé corroborated this entry with epigraphic sources and indications in medieval itineraries, which led him firmly establish Quirinus' cult in Rome. An inscription and medieval itineraries attest the deposition of relics belonging to a martyr named Quirinus in the Platonía, on the Via Appia. I shall present these sources in the next sections.²⁹ Significant at this point is that these indicate the deposition at the third mile, and not at the fourth, as the Bernensis. Delehayé ascribed this discrepancy to the frequent mistakes that occurred in the transmission history of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. He also deemed that, since the Roman cult of three saints mentioned in the codex Bernensis cannot be certified, their presence in the *Hieronymianum* is the result of yet another contamination. However, Delehayé also noted that Quirinus' placement in Rome occurs on the same date as his *dies natalis*. This coincidence could challenge the hypothesis that the Bernensis refers to the deposition of Quirinus' relics in Rome.³⁰

Delehayé's opinion became authoritative for those scholars who consider that the relics deposited in the Platonía are those of Quirinus, bishop of Siscia.³¹ However,

²⁷ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 4. iun. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 75): Eptern. in Ninive... Quirinae ... Cyrini episcopi ... In Saba ciuitate Pannoniae Quirini; Wissenb. Nividuno ciuitate ... Quirini ... Cyrini episcopi ... In Sabaria ciuitate Quirini; Rich. Et in Saracia ciuitate Pannoniarum Cyrini episcopi.

²⁸ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 4. iun. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 75).

²⁹ See. below, sections I.1.4, I.1.5.

³⁰ Delehayé, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 303n26.

³¹ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 70-71; Antonio Ferrua, "Dalla Pannonia a Roma: Storia della fine del IV secolo," *CivCatt* 88, no. 4 (1937): 129-140; Antonio Ferrua, *Epigrammata Damasiana*, SSAC 2 (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1942), 236; Roberto Valentini and Giuseppe Zucchetti, eds., *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, FSI 88 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1949), 44-45, 85, 111, 148; Agostino

others have debated this identification. Cecilia Roncaioli pointed out a series of textual discordances that challenge such interpretation.³²

Roncaioli highlighted that the list of the *Hieronymianum*, in spite of its ambiguities, is a well structured enumeration, in which indications of place precede the names of the celebrated saints. If the structure “Romae ... miliario IIII” is reported to Quirinus, the last three names (*Picti, Daciani, Aricii*) would exceptionally remain hanging (without an allocated place).³³ With regard to these names, Roncaioli drew partially on Delehaye’s explanations,³⁴ and considered that the passage reiterates, with many corruptions, the celebration of Laurentinus and Pergentinus on the 3rd of June. She interpreted *Aricii* as referring to Arezzo, and *Daciani* as being originally *diaconi*, Laurentinus’ ecclesiastical office. Laurentinus’ name would have been omitted from the list. Roncaioli also considered *Expergenti* to stand for *Pergentini*, referring to the saint associated in Arezzo to Laurentinus.

As for the topographic indications in Rome, Roncaioli proposed that they resulted from an erroneous association of two homonymous martyrs in one branch of the martyrological tradition, in a much corrupted list. Based on coincidence of name, Quirinus of Siscia was associated with the Roman martyr Quirinus buried in the Platonía. Aware of the celebration of Quirinus in Rome, the compiler / copyist of codex Bernensis inserted the toponym *Romae* at first in the margins of the codex, from where it was later transferred into the list itself and completed with detailed reference to the burial site on Via Appia.³⁵

Roncaioli extended her conclusions in a broader analysis of sources in order to demonstrate that Quirinus’ relics had never been taken to Rome.³⁶ She considered that the source of the martyrological entries was the *Passio Quirini*, given that they placed Quirinus in Savaria and not Siscia.³⁷ In turn, the confusion with the Roman Quirinus propagated in the *Hieronymianum* led to the inclusion in the *Passio Quirini* of an *addendum* relative to the translation of Quirinus’ relics to Rome.

This view is unsatisfactory on two accounts. Firstly, martyrologies usually cite the *locus natalis* of a martyr – so it is natural that the *Hieronymianum* mentions Savaria, where Quirinus had been martyred, and not Siscia, his episcopal see. Secondly, the translation of Quirinus’ relics to Rome is echoed elsewhere in the

Amore, “Quirino,” *BSS* 8 (1968): 1333; J. Oswald, “Quirinus,” *LThK* 8² (1963): 948; “Saint Quirin évêque et martyr,” *Vie des saints et des bienheureux* 6 (1941): 66.

³² Roncaioli, “S. Quirino,” 225-227. Against the Roman translation stand, apart from Roncaioli, Renate Pillinger, “Quirinus,” *LThK* 8³ (1999): 777; Ada Gonzato, Massimiliano Poncina and Maria Veronese, eds., *Passioni e atti dei martiri – Vittorino di Petovio, Opere*, vol. 2, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Aquileiensis (Città Nuova: Società per la conservazione della Basilica di Aquileia, 2002), 151; Chiesa, “Passio Quirini,” 527, who follows Roncaioli.

³³ Roncaioli, “S. Quirino,” 227.

³⁴ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 303.

³⁵ Roncaioli, “S. Quirino,” 226.

³⁶ Cf. below.

³⁷ Roncaioli, “S. Quirino,” 225-7.

Hieronymianum. In the following note from the 30th of April, Quirinus and Via Appia appear again in close proximity:

ad 30. apr.: Romae in cimiterio Pretextati, Via Appia depositio Quirini martyris³⁸

The martyr commemorated here is the Roman tribune Quirinus, whose relics had been deposited in the cemetery of Praetextatus. Nonetheless, some manuscripts, other than the Bernensis, consider him a bishop.³⁹ This time, the confusion is reversed: The military tribune is confused with the Siscian bishop. The leap would be easily made if there was some knowledge that a bishop-martyr named Quirinus had been buried on the Via Appia.⁴⁰

Roncaioli also traced with minute attention the genesis of medieval martyrological eulogies referring to Quirinus of Siscia.⁴¹ As with other Pannonian martyrs, the first to mention Quirinus is the Anonymus Lugdunensis. Thus:

ad 4. iun.: Apud Illyricum, ciuitate Siscia, sancti Quirini episcopi: qui persecutione Maximiani, pro fide Christi, ligato ad manum molari saxo, in flumen praecipitatus est; et cum circumstantibus diu collocutus ne eius terrerentur exemplo, uix precibus ut mergeretur obtinuit.⁴²

The wording and style suggest that the Anonymus Lugdunensis took his cue from Jerome's *Chronicon*.⁴³ This explains also why he placed Quirinus in Siscia instead of citing the *locus natalis*, Savaria. In another significant discrepancy with the *Passio Quirini*, the anonymous martyrologist considered that the millstone had been tied to Quirinus' hands instead of his neck. This view was propagated throughout subsequent medieval tradition.

Florus cited integrally this eulogy and introduced the Roman translation:

ad 4. iun.: Apud Illyricum (...). Huius reliquiae translatae sunt Romam et positae in Catacumbas.⁴⁴

It remains unclear which source Florus used for the translation of the relics: was it the additional note at the end of the *Passio Quirini*⁴⁵ or the *Hieronymianum*?⁴⁶ Both are possible, although, as Roncaioli mentioned, it seems strange that Florus, had he used the *Passio* as source, failed to change the *locus natalis* into Savaria. Florus is

³⁸ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 30 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 52).

³⁹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 30 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 52): Eptern. *Romae Quirini episcopi*; Wissenb. *Romae depositio Quirini episcopi*; Rich. *Romae depositio Quirini episcopi*.

⁴⁰ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 221n99.

⁴¹ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 227-232.

⁴² Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique*, 102.

⁴³ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 228; Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 525. See also Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 183.

⁴⁴ Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique*, 102.

⁴⁵ Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 274.

⁴⁶ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 229.

not unfamiliar with the reinterpretation of topographic indications in the *Hieronymianum*. The ambiguity of the latter's list on the 4th of June, which, as we have seen, fostered the association of Quirinus with the cemetery *ad Catacumbas*, presented Florus another opportunity to elaborate on.⁴⁷

Ado presents us with a slightly revised version of Florus' note. Notably, he omitted references to the millstone tied to Quirinus' hand. In the second recension of his work, Ado added a note on Prudentius, which he borrowed from the martyrology of Usuard:

ad 4. iun.: Apud Illyricum, ciuitate Siscia, natale sancti Quirini episcopi, qui persecutione Maximiani, pro fide Christi (ut Prudentius scribit) et cum circumstantibus diu collocutus ne eius terrentur exemplo, uix precibus ut mergeretur obtinuit. Huius reliquiae translatae sunt Romam et positas in Catacumbas.⁴⁸

Neither Usuard, nor Prudentius are the source of this eulogy, which adapts previous ones.⁴⁹ The addition "ut Prudentius scribit" was inserted, indeed, after Usuard. The latter must have been aware of *Peristephanon VII*, since he mentions it directly. But Usuard composed his eulogy based exclusively on previous martyrologies / the *Chronicon* of Jerome.⁵⁰ Usuard, like Ado, eliminated the reference to the persecution, but kept the millstone from Florus' martyrology. Yet, more importantly, Usuard omitted Florus' note on the relic translation:

ad 4. iun.: Apud Illyricum, ciuitate Siscia, natalis beati Quirini episcopi, qui pro fide Christi, ut Prudentius scribit, ligato ad manum molari saxo, in flumen praecipitatus, et cum circumstantibus diu conlocutus, ne eius terrentur exemplo, uix precibus ut mergeretur obtinuit.⁵¹

Finally, the *Martyrologium Romanum* emended the medieval martyrological tradition developed from the Anonymus Lugdunensis up to Usuard in light of a re-reading of both Jerome and Prudentius:

ad 4. iun: Sisciae, in Illyrico, Sancti Quirini Episcopi, qui, sub Galerio Praeside, pro fide Christi (ut Prudentius scribit), molari saxo ad collum ligato, in flumen praecipitatus est; sed, lapide supernatante, cum circumstantes Christianos, ne eius terrentur supplicio neue titubarent in fide, diu fuisset hortatus, ipse, ut martyrii gloriam assequeretur, precibus a Deo, ut mergeretur, obtinuit.⁵²

Concluding, it seems that medieval martyrologists circulated chiefly Jerome's note from the *Chronicon*. The *Hieronymianum* had been consulted, on occasion, as we have seen with Florus and the note concerning the relic transfer to Rome, but the

⁴⁷ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 229-230.

⁴⁸ Dubois and Renaud, *Le martyrologe d'Adon*, 184.

⁴⁹ See also the note of the editors in Dubois and Renaud, *Le martyrologe d'Adon*, 184.

⁵⁰ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 230.

⁵¹ Dubois, *Le martyrologe d'Usuard*, 241.

⁵² Johnson and Ward, *Martyrologium Romanum*, 135.

principal source remains Jerome. Their awareness of the *Passio Quirini* was limited. It was only with the first modern attempt to critically systematize the traditions on the martyrs, the *Martyrologium Romanum*, that the various ancient sources had been given equal ground. Yet, in this case too, the *Passio Quirini* was not counted among these sources.

1.4. Medieval Itineraries

In early medieval Rome, four itineraries mention the tomb of a martyr Quirinus in the cemetery *ad Catacumbas*, on the Via Appia: *Notula oleorum*; *De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae*, *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*, and *Itinerarium Malmesburiense*. The list of the *Notitia ecclesiarum* contains the most elaborate note on Quirinus:

Postea peruenies uia Appia ad sanctum Sebastianum martyrem, cuius corpus iacet in inferiore loco, et ibi sunt sepulcra apostolorum Petri et Pauli, in quibus XL annorum requiescebant, et in occidentali parte ecclesiae per gradus discendis ubi sanctus Cyrinus papa et martir pausat; (...) ⁵³

The details of the *Notitia ecclesiarum* can be translated to refer to “Quirinus bishop and martyr,” since for the Roman itineraries, *papa* (the bishop of Rome *stricto sensu*) can designate a bishop. Unfortunately, other itineraries either cite simply the name, Quirinus / Cyrinus, or at best add the qualification *martyr*, with no further indications of office.⁵⁴ Thus, the *Notitia ecclesiarum* has an exceptional status. Itineraries, unfortunately, are of little help in clarifying the identity of the Quirinus whose relics rested in Rome.

1.5. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources

First and foremost, it should be mentioned that archaeological excavations conducted in Savaria confirm the topography of the *Passio Quirini*. They brought to light the remains of the amphitheatre and the bridge across the river Sibaris / Perint.⁵⁵ Moreover, small finds discovered near the gate to Scarbantia may be Christian.⁵⁶ The finds consist of a helmet mount decorated with a Christogram; and

⁵³ Testini, *Archeologia*, 52.

⁵⁴ *Notula oleorum*: “(...) Sci Quirini (...)” *De locis sanctis martyrum*: “Et iuxta eandem uiam ecclesia est Sancti Sebastiani martyris ubi ipse dormit, ubi sunt et sepulturae Apostolorum in quibus XL annis quieuerunt; ibi quoque et Cyrinus martyr est sepultus;” *Itinerarium Malmesburiense*: “Ibi requiescunt sanctus Sebastianus et Quirinus, et olim quieuerunt ibi apostolorum corpora.” See Testini, *Archeologia*, 52-53.

⁵⁵ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 84-90, with extensive discussion on previous hypotheses.

⁵⁶ Edith B. Thomas, “Zur Quirinus- und Martinfrage in Sabaria: Frühchristliche Kontinuität im westpannonischen Raum,” *Burgenländische Heimatblätter* 43 (1981): 7-13; Dorottya Gáspár, *Christianity*

the hanger of a lamp decorated with a staurogram. They were discovered in two neighbouring *insulae* situated on Kőszegi street, the site where archaeologists believe the city gate to Scarbantia once stood.⁵⁷ Especially the peculiar shape of the helmet mount, of which there is only one parallel in Pannonia Prima, but which occurs more frequently in Savia, enables the dating to the second half of the fourth century.

The helmet mount, made of silver, has long been considered a fibula belonging to the liturgical habit of Early Christian clergy.⁵⁸ On these grounds, scholars ventured the hypothesis that the *insula* where the mount was discovered housed the church where the martyr's relics had been deposited according to the *passio*. Further research demonstrated with absolute certainty that this type of artefact belongs to a helmet. The weight of the argument then fell on the lamp hanger – a find too minute to conjecture the existence of a basilica.⁵⁹ The lamp hanger and helmet mount suggest, nonetheless, that Christians did reside near the Scarbantian gate, lending credence to the idea that the cult of Quirinus was celebrated in Savaria.

Branka Migotti proposed that Quirinus enjoyed a cult in Siscia, too.⁶⁰ To date, however, this theory has no archaeological proof. Chiesa suggested that no particular community claimed Quirinus as exclusive saint.⁶¹ This observation might explain why his cult is so diffuse in Pannonia (hagiographic traditions mention Siscia, Savaria, Scarbantia), but also why it left so few material vestiges.

Outside Pannonia, the cult of Quirinus appears more focused, notably in the region of Aquileia. An oval silver reliquary from Aquileia, now preserved in Grado, depicts the Cantii (Cantius, Cantianus, and Cantianilla, Aquileian martyrs), Quirinus, and the Roman martyr Latinus on one of its sides. On the other side are portraits of Christ surrounded by Peter and Paul; on the lid, flanked by two sheep, is a *crux gemmata* from which the four rivers of Paradise flow. The martyr portraits can be identified based on an inscription that runs around the upper part of the reliquary (above the portraits), and which follows their sequence:

*san(c)tus cantius san(ctus) (can)tianus sancta cantianilla san(c)tus quirinus
san(c)tus latinu|s.*⁶²

The reliquary is dated to the turn of the sixth century.⁶³ Another inscription running below the portraits identifies the donors as Laurentius, Ioannes (both *uiri spectabiles*) and Niceforus, and suggests the reliquary was an ex-voto offering.⁶⁴

in Roman Pannonia: An Evaluation of Early Christian Finds and Sites from Hungary, BAR International Series 1010 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 114-118.

⁵⁷ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 93.

⁵⁸ Ottó Sosztarics, "Urchristliche Kleidungs-nagel aus Savaria," *Specimina Nova* 12 (1996): 311-312.

⁵⁹ See also Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 515n29.

⁶⁰ Migotti, *Evidence*, 22.

⁶¹ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 525.

⁶² *ILCV* 1910.

⁶³ Galit Noga-Banai, *The Trophies of the Martyrs: An Art-Historical Study of Early Christian Silver Reliquaries*, Oxford Studies in Byzantium (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 95-120, based on an

In all likelihood, it contains relics “safeguarded” from Aquileia when the see of the Aquileian episcopacy was transferred to Grado.⁶⁵ It can be considered proof that Quirinus’ cult was indeed celebrated at Aquileia. Significant is also the association with the apostles Peter and Paul, which appears in the *addendum* of the *Passio Quirini* relative to the Roman translation (burial in the “basilica apostolorum”).

Since Aquileia was one of the main escape stations of Pannonians en route to the inner parts of Italy, but also given its strong ties with establishments in Pannonia Prima, it is entirely possible that Quirinus’ relics had been taken there sometime at the end of the fourth or in the course of the fifth century. The medieval *Chronicon Gradense* mentions that relics of a certain Quirinus were transferred from Aquileia to Grado:

Cumque idem uenerabilis patriarcha [= Paulus] ad destructam Aquileiensium ciuitatem cum populi multitudine ire disponderet, diuina reuelatione sibi innotuit qualiter ciues Aquileie seuissimam Longobardorum rabiem in Gradense castrum fugientes beatissima corpora sanctorum Quirini, Ilari et Taciani et ceterorum secum aspostauerunt. Hac itaque reuelatione non parum illarescens et translationem eorum scripsit et natalicii diem constituit celebrari...⁶⁶

According to this source, the Christian community of Aquileia must have been in possession of Quirinus’ relics before the Lombard invasion in the sixth century. The treatment of Late Antiquity in the *Chronicon Gradense* must be treated with caution, just like other medieval chronicles from the Aquileian region.⁶⁷ On balance, however, a cult dedicated to Quirinus at Aquileia cannot be denied.

Turning to the problematic Platonica in Rome: Quirinus’ possible translation there has been inferred from a (quite fragmentary) inscription in one of the frescoes on the walls of the Platonica. The text confirms the indications of the *Hieronymianum*:

[- - -] deuotam / quae tibi, martyr, ego rependo munera laudis. / hoc opus est nostrum, haec omnis cura laboris, / ut dignam meritis [habeas sedemque decoram]. / haec populis c[unctis constabit] gloria facti, / haec, Quirine, tuas [laudes celebrando] probabi.⁶⁸

extensive comparative analysis with late antique iconographic representations in Aquileia and Ravenna. Gonzato, Poncina and Veronese, *Passioni*, 171, date it to the sixth century; Bratož, “La Chiesa,” considers it a fifth-century reliquary. See also Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 90; Chiesa, “Passio Quirini,” 528; Erik Thunø, “Reliquaries and the Cult of Relics in Late Antiquity,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Art*, ed. Robin M. Jensen and Mark D. Ellison (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 156, 158.

⁶⁴ Thunø, “Reliquaries,” 158; Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: The Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400 – circa 1204* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 63.

⁶⁵ Gonzato, Poncina and Veronese, *Passioni*, 171.

⁶⁶ *Chronicon Gradense* (ed. Monticolo, 1:41.9-23), cited in Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 147.

⁶⁷ Cf. Chiesa, “Passio Quirini,” 528 and n65.

⁶⁸ *ICUR* 5.13276 = *ILCV* 1.1777. See also Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 100n326. I cited the reading of Ernst Diehl, ed., *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae veteres*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925), 327. A slightly altered reading is given by Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 161: [---] deuotam / quae tibi martyr ego rependo

This inscription is an epigram composed in Damasian style.⁶⁹ Scholarship advanced conflicting opinions on its dating. Some believe it to be a genuine epigram composed by pope Damasus as part of his grand project to adorn the Roman catacombs.⁷⁰ Others, however, postpone its composition to the early or mid-fifth century. They argue that, although the style is similar, the execution of the letters is different from other inscriptions commissioned by Damasus.⁷¹ The incision *in stucco* would be a singular occurrence amongst Damasian epigrams.⁷²

Immediately below the inscription, the fresco depicts Christ flanked by two men, one older and one younger, each above one *loculus* of tomb 13. The older man is Quirinus. The reliquary below his portrait contains the bones and cranium of an old man,⁷³ consequent with Quirinus' advanced age in the *Passio Quirini*.

The Platonía itself is a mausoleum of unusual shape, consisting of eleven *arcosolia* arranged in a circular structure, built by pope Liberius (352-366 AD) to house the relics of the apostles Peter and Paul.⁷⁴ After these had been transferred to the Vatican, ownership of the chapel was transferred to the families of high urban officials from Pannonia and Istria: Rufius Viventius Gallus, *praefectus Urbis*, native of Siscia⁷⁵ and Simplicius, *vicarius Urbi*, native of Emona.⁷⁶ The mausoleum also contains the tombs of the virgin Maximilla and her deaconess mother, Nunita. Both were from Pannonia, and had a close friendship with Luceia, the daughter of Viventius.⁷⁷ Another tomb carries the name Flavia Viventia, "ex prouincia Pannonia."⁷⁸

Antonio Ferrua believed that this influx of Pannonian natives buried in the Platonía was due to the presence of the relics of Quirinus of Siscia. Consequently, he established the date of the translation sometime between 378 and 389 AD.⁷⁹ If these

munera laudis / hoc opus est nostrum haec omnia cura laboris / ut dignam meritis [habeas sedemque decoram] / haec populis cunctis constabit gloria facti / haec, Quirine, tuas [laudes crebrendo] probabit.

⁶⁹ Anton De Waal, *Die Apostelgruft ad Catacumbas an der Via Appia: Eine historisch-archaeologische Untersuchung auf Grund der neusten Ausgrabungen*, RQ.S 3 (Freiburg: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1894), 97-105; G. Kaster, "Quirinus (Cirin) von Siscia (Sisseck)," *LCI* 8 (1976): 242.

⁷⁰ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 222 and 241n42. Roncaioli has, however, good reasons to accept the earlier date, since it constitutes proof against identifying the Quirinus buried in the Platonía with the bishop of Siscia.

⁷¹ E.g., Antonio Ferrua, *Epigrammata*, 236; Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 161.

⁷² Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 104. This inscription is not included in the collection of *epigrammata* published by Antonio Ferrua and Carlo Carletti, eds., *Damasus und die römischen Martyrer* (Vatican: Pontificia Commissione di Archeologia Sacra, 1986).

⁷³ De Waal, *Die Apostelgruft*, 114-116; Kaster, "Quirinus," 242.

⁷⁴ Although Antonio Ferrua, *La basilica e la catacomba di S. Sebastiano*, Catacombe di Roma e d'Italia 3 (Vatican: Pontificia commissione di archeologia sacra, 1990), 78-80, and Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 527, believe the tradition relative to the deposition of the apostles' relics to be of later date. Ferrua thinks it post-dates the translation of Quirinus' relics. Chiesa observed that the tradition of the apostolic deposition is formulated in terms similar to the note in the *Passio Quirini*, and is attested with certainty only after the eighth century.

⁷⁵ *PLRE*, 1:972, s.v. "Viventius" (*PPO Galliarum* 368-371 AD and *PVR* 365-367 AD).

⁷⁶ *PLRE*, 1:844, s.v. "Flavius Simplicius 7" (*vicarius urbis Romae* 374-375 AD).

⁷⁷ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 223-224; Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 100.

⁷⁸ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 101.

⁷⁹ Ferrua, "Dalla Pannonia," 129-140.

relics were indeed those of the Siscian bishop, the reverse is also possible: That the Pannonian ownership of the mausoleum prompted their deposition in the Platonía. In this case, the Pannonian burials in the Platonía represent the *terminus post quem* for the hypothetical transfer of relics.⁸⁰

1.6. Concluding Observations on the Elements of the Hagiographic Dossier: Place and Date of Martyrdom; Translation of Relics

The sources discussed above raised a series of challenges with respect to Quirinus' place and date of martyrdom, as well as with respect to the translation of his relics. In the following, I shall address each aspect separately.

As we have seen, ancient sources ascribe Quirinus' martyrdom to two places: Siscia (Jerome and Prudentius) and Savaria (the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* and the Roman recension of the *Passio Quirini*). Judging by the manner of death (drowning), the logical choice should fall on Siscia, since the waters of the Sava, flowing nearby, are much deeper than the shallow Perint.⁸¹ Still, there is no reason to suppose that the *Passio Quirini* conflated the hagiographies of two distinct martyrs, one celebrated at Siscia, one in Savaria. Savaria in the *Hieronymianum* might simply refer to a place of cult. The *passio's* Roman recension capitalises on earlier information relative to Quirinus' death. Given how diffuse Quirinus' cult was in Pannonia, it is more likely that the exact place of his martyrdom remained unknown – or that doubts persisted in this respect. The Savarian cult of Quirinus of Siscia, however, cannot be dismissed, as it played a significant role in the popularity acquired by the martyr.

Concerning the date of Quirinus' martyrdom, we can only approximate. The only secure reference point is the Diocletianic persecution. Jerome gives the year 308 AD. As stated, the prologue of the *Passio Quirini* implies that both Galerius and Diocletian were acting as *augusti*; it also suggests that all persecuting edicts were in effect when Quirinus was arrested. Taken together, these clues indicate rather the date 304-305 AD – but this depends, of course, on whether one is prepared to grant historical accuracy to the prologue.

The cult of Quirinus spread at a relatively early date, first in Pannonia, then to other regions. Initially it developed independently from the translation of relics and even from a narrative tradition. Quirinus' fame reached Aquileia by the end of the fourth century and even Rome, where Prudentius presumably encountered it. At the time, all that was known about him was the manner of his death, that he had been the bishop of Siscia, and the day when his martyrdom was commemorated. Noteworthy

⁸⁰ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 104, also favoured a later translation, certainly after 405, when Prudentius wrote his hymn.

⁸¹ Thus Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 522-523. A bridge across the Sava is also the site where Irenaeus of Sirmium was martyred. See chapter II below.

here is that on the reliquary from Grado Quirinus is depicted as a young man. Somewhat later the *Passio Quirini* attempted to sort out the array of confusing factors.⁸²

Quirinus' relics eventually found their way to Aquileia, probably in the course of the fifth century – certainly before its close, as the Grado reliquary certifies. They might have been (partially) transferred to Rome as well. Quirinus' cult was popularised there by high-ranking persons with connections to Pannonia. In these milieus the *Passio Quirini* also took hold. That the additional note of the *passio* contains only the Roman translation and deposition should not puzzle: As Roncaioli rightly showed, it is specific to the Roman manuscript branch and it represents a ninth-century attempt to explain how Quirinus' relics ended up in Rome,⁸³ without dwelling necessarily on the route they crossed.

⁸² Cf. Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 517: "È possibile ... ricostruire una vicenda in cui trovino riscontro *tutte e quattro* informazioni riportate da queste due fonti: l'episcopato a *Siscia*, la morte a *Sabaria*, la data del martirio al 4 giugno, l'esecuzione per annegamento. Questa vicenda è appunto quella narata dalla *Passio*." Chiesa refers here to the notes in the *Chronicon* and the *Hieronymianum*.

⁸³ Roncaioli, "S. Quirino," 235.

2. PASSIO QUIRINI

2.1. Redactions

Before proceeding to an analysis of the *Passio Quirini*, it is imperative to address the issue of the redactional integrity of the text. The *addictio* suggests at least two redactional layers: sometime in the ninth century, a Roman scribe deemed it necessary to add a note concerning the translations of Quirinus' relics. Another problematic passage from a redactorial point of view is the conclusion, borrowed almost literally from Jerome.

Could the conclusion not be another editorial addition? According to all indications, the *passio* had been composed in Savaria. Albeit a provincial capital situated on the commercial artery of the Amber Road, it is hard to imagine in Savaria an intense circulation of books. It might well be that somebody worked Jerome's note into the text of the *passio* at a later date.

In his extensive analysis of this text's transmission history, Paolo Chiesa identified two extant redactions, which he named *recensio Romana* and *recensio Aquileiensis*. Chiesa concluded that the *passio* is a stratified text, composed of three distinct elements: the prologue (chapter I), the trial section (chapters II-VI), and the section on Quirinus' death (chapter VII.1-2).⁸⁴ The trial section represents the core. The prologue and the death note were added later, the first to contextualise the narrated events, the second to fulfil hagiographic requirements – notably to indicate the place, date, and manner of death; the fate of the relics; and the beginnings of the cult. Initially based on Jerome's *Chronicon*, the death note was in time modified either to incorporate a martyrological eulogy that contained the same information as the *Hieronymianum* or to give a rationale for Quirinus' cult in Savaria: What better way to explain its rise than to consider that the martyr had died there, especially since there was a trial to substantiate this claim. Discrepancies in the trial section between the court hearing at Siscia and the one in Savaria prompted Chiesa to posit two redactors. In particular, he noted that Quirinus' replies at Siscia are introduced by "respondere;" whereas those in Savaria, by "dicere."⁸⁵ To this we may add different registers of addressing Maximus and Amantius, respectively. At Siscia, Quirinus confronts the *iuridicus* Maximus with vehement polemics. At times he adopts a despising attitude. With the *praeses* Amantius, in turn, he is very respectful, he even follows the customary protocol of address (e.g., VI.4: "potestas tua," "legibus uestris"). However, the difference in rank between the two officials – and the corresponding gravity of the respective trials – may account for these incongruences. No other, more explicit,

⁸⁴ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 510-525.

⁸⁵ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 516.

pointers, substantiate the corroboration of two distinct trial accounts written by different authors.

Chiesa also noted two other redactional interventions: at I.1 and V.2, marginal glosses made their way into the body of the extant recensions:

I.1, *rec. Aquil.*: cum mundi istius princeps diabolus

V.2: Cumque deductus fuisset beatus Quirinus ad Primam Pannoniam et per singulas ciuitates uinctus catenis ad praesidis Amantii iudicium traheretur [siquidem ad ripam Danubii ad singulas ciuitates]

The gloss “cum mundi istius princeps” qualified the term “diabolus”. Chiesa saw in this a solid argument to prove that the Aquileian recension of the prologue is the authentic one.⁸⁶ The second gloss, “siquidem ad ripam Danubii” originally explained “singulas ciuitates,” which the gloss itself reiterates. This need to clarify geographical coordinates is uncharacteristic for the trial section. The topography here is rendered with precision. The gloss must have been inserted into the main text in Carolingian or post-Carolingian times, when “ad ripas Danubii” is attested in reference to Pannonia.⁸⁷

Chiesa edited the two recensions separately. He considered that retracing them to a single archetype would be forcefully reductive and would lead to arbitrary editorial choices. He nonetheless ascertained that the two derive from a common archetype. The *recensio Aquileiensis* revised this archetype into a more elegant rendering. Characteristic to the *recensio Romana*, in turn, are the references to Quirinus’ death in Savaria, his burial and the fate of his relics. The Aquileian recension mentions that Amantius sentenced Quirinus to be cast into the (unnamed!) river with a millstone tied to his neck, that he was thrown off a bridge, floated, conversed with onlookers, and drowned only after having asked for his death in prayer. The Roman recension adds to this a host of details on the place of his martyrdom (Savaria); the *inuentio* and *depositio* of his relics in Savaria, in a basilica at the Scarbantian gate; the translation of his relics to Rome by refugees from Scarbantia; their deposition in the catacombs of San Sebastiano; the translation to Santa Maria in Trastevere.⁸⁸

In Chiesa’s view, therefore, the Aquileian recension, although being the product of a “*riscrittura profonda e innovativa*,”⁸⁹ has the advantage from the point of view of structure. From a textual perspective, however, priority must be given to the Roman recension – with the caveat that certain passages of the archetype are rendered more faithfully in the Aquileian recension.

Unsurprisingly, the most apparent discrepancies between the two recensions appear in the prologue and the death note. These also contain passages where the

⁸⁶ Chiesa, “*Passio Quirini*,” 534.

⁸⁷ Chiesa, “*Passio Quirini*,” 512.

⁸⁸ *Pass. Quir.* VII.1-VIII.2.

⁸⁹ Chiesa, “*Passio Quirini*,” 556.

reading of the *recensio Aquileiensis* reflects the archetype, and the *recensio Romana* transmits various degrees of corruption.

Chiesa demonstrated that the prologue is *the* bone of contention between the two recensions. Many significant variants in the two prologues cannot be reduced to mere literary re-writing. In this instance, the prologue of the Aquileian recension is neatly superior from a textual point of view:

rec. Romana

I. Cum mundi istius **principes** ad **cruciandas** sanctorum animas diabolus **commouisset** et ubique Domini ecclesias diuersis persecutionum tempestatibus uentilaret, suscitatis **regum** amicis per quos amplius **aduersus** Dei populum proelia commoueret **agebat** quotidie suae incrementa saeuitiae.
2. **Prementibus** itaque Maximiani imperatoris legibus, **christianus** infestabatur exercitus; per Illyricum uero **Diocletianus** sacrilegis praeceptis in Christi **populum** hostiliter saeuiebat, **addito tyrannidi** suae alio Maximiano in regno **participe**, qui **et** suam rabiem et Diocletiani per omnem Illyricum ostenderet.
3. **Fere tamen** omnes **prouinciarum** iudices nefandorum principum **sacrilegos** apices mittebant, ut in **templa** daemonum **immolare cogerent** christianos; **Christi** ecclesiae **claudabantur**, Christi sacerdotes et **ministri** ut parerent **legibus** publicis et confiterentur deos esse; quibus **si** thura **nollent** accendere, suppliciis diuersis et mortibus subiacerent.

rec. Aquileiensis

I. Cum mundi istius **princeps diabolus** ad **cribrandas** sanctorum animas **accepisset potestatem** et ubique Domini ecclesias diuersis persecutionum tempestatibus uentilaret, suscitatis **in regno** amicis **suis** per quos amplius **aduersum** Dei populum proelia commoueret, **augebat** quotidie suae incrementa saeuitiae;
2. **per orientem** itaque Maximiani imperatoris legibus **christianorum** infestabatur exercitus, per Illyricum uero **Diocletiani** sacrilegis praeceptis in Christi **populo** hostiliter saeuiebat, **edito tyrannidis** suae alio Maximiano in regno **principe**, qui suam rabiem et Diocletiani **imperatoris** per omnem Illyricum ostenderet **feritatem**. 3. **Ad** omnes **autem prouincias idem** iudices nefandorum principum **sacrilegi** apices mittebant, ut in **templum** daemonum **cogerent immolare** christianos, **ecclesias clauderent**, Christi sacerdotes et **ministros compellerent** ut parerent **iussionibus** publicis et confiterentur deos esse quibus thura accendere **iubebantur, qui si contemnerent**, suppliciis diuersis et mortibus subiacerent.

The Italian scholar observed that the prologue in the Aquileian recension has a well-defined theological agenda that emphasises the agency of the devil and the purifying dimension of the persecution (“ad **cribrandas** sanctorum animas”).⁹⁰ In addition, “mundi istius princeps diabolus” in the Aquileian recension seems to be a gloss at origin, being the more logical option against the reference to “mundi istius principes” being influenced by the devil. Other text-critical aspects confirm that the reading of the *Aquileiensis* is closer to the archetype: At I.1 “cribrandas” is superior to “cruciandas;” “commouisset” in the Roman recension doubles suspiciously the

⁹⁰ Pass. Quir., rec. Aquil. I.1 (ed. Chiesa, 574).

“commoueret” a few sentences later; at I.2/3 the Roman recension changed “feritatem” in “fere tamen.”⁹¹

For reasons obvious by now, one must assume that the archetype did not contain the indications from the final chapters of the Roman recension. It is likely that the passage on Quirinus’ death in the archetype was phrased in terms similar to Jerome’s note in the *Chronicon*. Both recensions of the *Passio Quirini* agree substantially with it, albeit containing variations of different degrees, as the following comparison shows:⁹²

| rec. Romana | rec. Aquileiensis | <i>Chronicon</i> ad a. 308 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>VI.5. Amantius praeses dixit: “Diu te ad oboedientiam regalium praeceptorum inclinare uoluimus; sed quia rigor mentis domari non potuit, eris in exemplum omnium christianorum, ut formam tuae mortis qui uiuere cupiunt expauescant.”</p> | <p>VI.5. Amantius praeses dixit: “Diu te ad oboedientiam regalium praeceptorum inclinare uoluimus; sed quoniam rigor mentis tuae domari non potuit, eris in exemplum omnibus christianis, ut formam tuae mortis qui uiuere cupiunt expauescant.</p> | <p>Quirinus episcopus Siscianus gloriose pro Christo interficitur:</p> |
| <p>VII. Tunc inter ceteras quas pertulit passiones iussit sancto Dei sacerdoti uel famulo <i>molam ad collum ligari</i>, et in fluuii <u>Sabari</u> undas demergi.</p> <p>2. Cumque <i>de ponte praecipitatus</i> fuisset in fluuium et diutissime supernataret, cum spectantibus collocutus est ne suo <i>terrarentur exemplo, uix orans ut mergeretur obtinuit.</i></p> | <p>VII.1. Deinde cum lapide molari dimergendus in gurgitem praecipitaberis.”</p> <p>2. Cumque <i>de ponte praecipitatus in flumine diutissime supernataret, cum expectantibus collocutus ne sui</i> <i>terrarentur exemplo, mox</i> <i>orans ut mergeretur obtinuit.</i></p> <p>Tunc beatus Quirinus episcopus dixit: “Gratias tibi ago, Domine Iesu Christe, quia hodie spectaculum factus sum angelis et hominibus et confessio mea tenetur apud Deum.”</p> | <p>nam, manuali <i>mola ad collum ligata</i>,</p> <p><i>e ponte praecipitatus in flumen, diutissime supernatauit et cum spectantibus collocutus, ne sui terrarentur exemplo, uix orans ut mergeretur, obtinuit.</i></p> |
| <p>3. Cuius corpus non longe ab eodem loco ubi demersum fuerat inuentum est, ubi etiam et locus</p> | | |

⁹¹ Chiesa, “Passio Quirini,” 533-534.

⁹² A comparative table focused on the text of the *Chronicon* can be found in Chiesa, “Passio Quirini,” 518.

orationis habetur. 4. Sed ipsum sanctum corpus in basilicam ad Scarabetensem portam est depositum, ubi maior est pro meritis eius frequentia procedendi.

5. **Passus** est autem beatus Quirinus episcopus **Siscianus martyr Christi** sub die pridie Nonarum **Iuniarum, et coronatus est** a Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria **et potestas** in saecula saeculorum. Amen. **VIII.** Facta autem incursione...

5. **Martyrizatus** est autem beatus Quirinus episcopus sub die pridie Nonarum **Iunii, regnante** Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Evidently, the redactors of both recensions handled innovatively the information at hand. The *recensio Aquileiensis* presented the sentence as part of the dialogue with Amantius, not as a third-party narration as in the *recensio Romana* and the *Chronicon*. In addition, it changed or added certain expressions to raise the literary elegance of the text (as we have seen, this is characteristic to the entire Aquileian recension), and added, rather anachronistically, Quirinus' last words: Quirinus' final prayer is pronounced after he was granted his death wish.

The *recensio Romana*, in turn, singularly introduced the name of the river in which Quirinus was cast. Neither the Aquileian recension, nor Jerome mention this, suggesting that it was absent from the archetype. Faced with the unknown location, the redactor must have sought it in the trial section, and supposed it was the river that crossed Savaria. The information on the *inuentio* and the deposition of Quirinus' relics contained in the Roman recension should be, thus, treated with caution. The redactor was clearly not familiar with Pannonian topography. Rather than stating facts, he reworked information from the trial section.⁹³ This being said, the trial section could nonetheless suggest a cult dedicated to Quirinus both at Siscia and in Savaria, and quite possibly even in Scarbantia. This brings us to the complicated problem of ascertaining the historical reliability of the *Passio Quirini*.

⁹³ An additional, albeit rather circumstantial, argument in favour of considering these indications as later additions to the archetype could be that none of the Pannonian hagiographic narratives examined here mention the *inuentio* and *depositio* of the relics of the respective martyrs.

2.2. Historical Reliability; Date and Place of Composition

Aside from the section on Quirinus' burial and Roman translation, discussed above, a number of aspects concur to form a composite image on the historical reliability of this hagiographic text.

Of little import for a discussion on this subject are the legendary elements contained in the *Passio Quirini*, such as the conversion of the prison ward, or the falling of the chains on Quirinus' hands and feet when he received alms from the Christian women. These can be seen as signs of the transformation in which the hagiographic genre engaged starting with the later fourth century. As Chiesa suggested, since they occur "on the margins" of Quirinus' trial, they might have been added to a core originally narrating the trial itself. The sober tone and realistic presentation, like the juridical terminology and procedure described throughout the text, constitute weightier arguments for the archaicity of the *passio*.⁹⁴

The prologue describes in a peculiar way the edicts of persecution. It states that the emperors ordered Christians to sacrifice to the gods, churches to be closed, senior and minor clergy to be subject to the laws of the state, and to offer the compulsory sacrifice.⁹⁵ This description enumerates the general tenets of Diocletian's four edicts somewhat haphazardly. It is clear that the redactor's focus rested on the clergy. Here, too, we can identify parallels with other Pannonian hagiographies, notably the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*. The latter begins with a list of clergy martyred in Sirmium.⁹⁶ It is less certain whether this congruence means that the persecution in Pannonia targeted specifically the clergy and only to a lesser degree the general Christian population or the focus on the clergy stems rather from the choice of local hagiographers. The prominent role attributed to Galerius inclines the balance to the former: The *Passio Quirini* specifically states that Galerius (Maximianus in the narrative) orchestrated the violent implementation of the edicts in Illyricum, adding his own rage to Diocletian's savagery.⁹⁷ And we know that after the issue of the first edict, Galerius insisted to enforce the death penalty on the clergy who refused to offer sacrifice.

⁹⁴ On a discussion of these elements, see Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 513-516.

⁹⁵ *Pass. Quir.* I.3. Here the wording of the Aquileian recension refers to the edicts themselves, whereas the Roman recension presents rather the consequences of these edicts. The passage in the Aquileian version might be a re-writing, yet, since Chiesa finds the prologue of this version more reliable, I cite the variant of the *recensio Aquileiensis* (ed. Chiesa, 574): "Ad omnes autem prouincias idem iudices nefandorum principum sacrilegi apices mittebant, ut in templum daemonum cogerent immolare christianos; ecclesias clauderent, Christi sacerdotes et ministros compellerent ut parerent iussionibus publicis et confiterentur deos esse quibus thura accendere iuebantur; qui si contemnerent, suppliciis diuersis et mortibus subiacerent."

⁹⁶ *Pass. Poll.* I.

⁹⁷ *Pass. Quir.* I.2. In spite of differences, this is evident in both recensions.

Both persecuting officials, the *iuridicus* Maximus and the *praeses* Amantius are in all likelihood fictitious characters.⁹⁸ Chiesa's text-critical analysis clarified that the magistrate in Siscia, Maximus, was originally given the title *iuridicus* (judge or lower magistrate), which the Roman recension changed into *praeses*.⁹⁹ That we should not see Maximus as a governor goes to great lengths in dismissing the conflict of jurisdiction that would otherwise puzzle in this case (why would a governor send a prisoner to the governor of another province to receive the capital sentence?). The difference in rank between the two officials is emphasized by the different registers of address during the two hearings. That the text names Pannonia Prima as a province suggests that the redactor had in mind a later fourth-century administrative organisation. In turn, the fact that there was no higher official in residence at Siscia implies a political-administrative situation in which Pannonia Savia was "ruled" from Pannonia Prima. This situation is conceivable after 381 AD, when Savia was ceded to barbarian *foederati*.

Consequently, it can be stated that the *Passio Quirini* is immersed in the context of later fourth-century Western Pannonia, offering reliable information on this period and context. The redactor was so knowledgeable in terms of topography and political-administrative situation that his Pannonian identity cannot be denied. His audience, likewise, must have been local.¹⁰⁰ It is conceivable that Quirinus' hagiography emerged from his cult at Siscia and in Savaria,¹⁰¹ possibly supported by (oral?) traditions on his respective trials. The redactor of the *Passio Quirini* then harmonised these traditions into a double trial taking his cue from older, more authentic martyr-narratives, as well as the administrative outlook of his time.

Taken together, the information provided by Jerome, Prudentius, and the text itself suggests that the *Passio Quirini* was written after 380 AD, by a Western Pannonian hagiographer. The landmark of 380 AD, the date when Jerome completed his *Chronicon*, fits well with the dissolution of Roman higher administration in Savia. A *terminus ante quem* can be established to the sixth century: By that time, Gregory of Tours had the opportunity to consult the *Passio Quirini*. The provincial distinctions, which in the fifth century became obsolete, point to the fact that the *passio* had been written in late fourth – early fifth century.¹⁰² Written for a Pannonian audience, the *Passio Quirini* must have had initially a limited circulation, confined most probably to Pannonia. In 405 AD Prudentius had no knowledge of it; the Grado reliquary still depicted Quirinus as a young person at the turn of the sixth century, although the

⁹⁸ PLRE, 1:50, s.v. "Amantius," and 1:580, s.v. "Maximus 5," have been included among the *praesides* of Pannonia exclusively on the basis of the *Passio Quirini*, with the specification that the source is doubtful. As seen, the redactor of the *Passio Quirini* envisaged Maximus as a lower magistrate rather than a governor.

⁹⁹ Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 535.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 514-515.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Mócsy, *Pannonia*, 351: The *Passio Quirini* was written to serve Quirinus' cult in Savaria.

¹⁰² See Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," 515-516.

passio emphasises his venerable age.¹⁰³ The text then spread in Italy, the foreign context prompting a series of glosses that were eventually incorporated. It split in two redactions, one of which was supplemented with notes on the translation of Quirinus' relics.

2.3. Published Editions and Translations

The *Passio Quirini* was first edited in 1695 in the *Acta Sanctorum*, based on a sixteenth-century edition corroborated with the twelfth-century Vat.lat. 1191. This edition was republished in later collections, and, in recent times, translated in several modern languages (Italian, French, Hungarian). In 2013, Paolo Chiesa published a state-of-the-art critical edition and an Italian translation of the Roman recension:

Acta [S. Quirini episcopy, martyr Sisciae in Pannonia], ed. Daniel Papebrochius *ActaSS Iunii*, vol. 1 (Antwerp: Henricus Thieullier, 1695), 381-383.

Acta martyrum sincera et selecta, ed. Theodoricus Ruinart (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859), 522-524.

Paolo Chiesa, "Passio Quirini," in *Le passioni dei martiri aquileiesi e istriani*, ed. by Emanuela Colombi, vol. 2/1, *Fonti per la Storia della Chiesa in Friuli – Istituto Pio Paschini. Serie medievale 14* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2013), 562-583.

Passioni e atti dei martiri – Vittorino di Petovio, Opere, ed. and trans. Ada Gonzato, Massimiliano Poncina and Maria Veronese, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Aquileiensis 2* (Città Nuova: Società per la conservazione della Basilica di Aquileia, 2002), 152-159.

Petrus Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae in aetate Tetrarcharum I (A.D. 285-305)*, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae VI* (Budapest: Pytheas, 2011), 82-88.

Levente Nagy, *Pannóniai városok, mártírok, ereklyék: Négy szenvedéstörténet helyszínei nyomán – Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia: Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories*, *Thesaurus Historiae Ecclesiasticae in Universitate Quinqueecclesiensi 1* (Pécs: Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, 2012), 72-76.

Below I included the text of the Roman recension as established by Chiesa. The accompanying English translation is my own.

¹⁰³ This, however, might be due to iconographic conventions and style.

Passio Quirini

- recensio Romana -

I. Cum mundi istius principes ad cruciandas sanctorum animas diabolus commouisset et ubique Domini ecclesias diuersis persecutionum tempestatibus uentilaret, suscitatis regum amicis per quos amplius aduersus Dei populum proelia commoueret agebat quotidie suae incrementa saeuitiae. 2. Prementibus itaque
5 Maximiani imperatoris legibus, christianus infestabatur exercitus; per Illyricum uero Diocletianus sacrilegis praeceptis in Christi populum hostiliter saeuiebat, addito tyrannidi suae alio Maximiano in regno partecipe, qui et suam rabiem et Diocletiani per omnem Illyricum ostenderet. 3. Fere tamen omnes prouinciarum iudices nefandorum principum sacrilegos apices mittebant, ut in templa daemonum
10 immolare cogerent christianos; Christi ecclesiae claudebantur, Christi sacerdotes et ministri ut parerent legibus publicis et confiterentur deos esse; quibus si thura nollent accendere, suppliciis diuersis et mortibus subiacerent.

II. Inter multos autem qui Christi exercitum triumphabant, beatus Quirinus episcopus Siscianus a Maximo praeside iussus est comprehendi. 2. Quem cum
15 studiose quaerent et beatus id sensisset episcopus, egressus est ciuitatem, et fugiens comprehensus est et deductus. 3. Cumque a Maximo iudice interrogaretur quo fugeret, Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Non fugiebam, sed iussum Domini mei faciebam. Scriptum nobis est: *Si uos persequuntur in una ciuitate, fugite in aliam.*"

4. Maximus praeses dixit: "Quis hoc praecepit?"

20 Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Christus, qui uerus est Deus."

5. Maximus dixit: "Et nescis quia ubique te imperatorum praecepta poterant inuenire, et hunc quem dicis Deum uerum comprehenso tibi subuenire non poterat, sicut et modo fugiens comprehensus es et deductus?"

Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Semper nobiscum est, et ubi fuerimus Dominus quem
25 colimus subuenire potest. Et modo cum apprehensus essem mecum erat, et hic *mecum est confortans me*, et ipse de meo ore tibi respondet."

18 Mt 10:23 || 20 uerus – Deus: 1 Jn 5:20 || 26 Dt 31:6; Josh 1:9; Is 41:10, Ez 3:14; Phil 4:13; 2 Tm 4:17

1/3 cum – uentilaret: cf. *Mart. Carpi* 17 (ed. Musurillo, 24.12-17); *Pass. Crispinae* 1.7 (ed. Musurillo, 304.8-10) || 8/9 fere – mittebant: cf. *Pass. Felicis* 1 (ed. Musurillo, 266.4-5) || 15/18 egressus – aliam: cf. *Mart. Polycarpi* 5 (ed. Musurillo, 4.28-6.1); *Mart. Agapis, Eirenis et Chionis* 1.3 (ed. Musurillo, 280.15-20); *Pass. Sereni* 1.2 || 26 mecum – respondet: cf. *Mart. Perpetuae* 15.6 (ed. Musurillo, 122.30-124.1) || confortans: *Pass. Iren.* 4.3

The Martyrdom of Saint Quirinus, Bishop and Martyr

I. When the devil provoked the rulers of this world to torment the souls of the saints and shook the churches of the Lord everywhere with various storms of persecutions, having aroused the friends of the kings through whom he could move larger battles against the people of God, he increased daily in his savagery. 2. The Christian army was being impaired by the oppressive laws of emperor Maximianus; in Illyricum Diocletian was raging as a foe against the people of Christ with sacrilegious precepts, having added to his tyranny the other Maximianus, partaker in the reign, who flaunted both his rage and that of Diocletian across the whole Illyricum. 3. Almost every provincial magistrate enacted the sacrilegious edicts¹⁰⁴ of these abominable emperors, to coerce Christians to sacrifice in the temples of demons; Christ's churches were closed, so that Christ's priests and servants would submit to the public laws¹⁰⁵ and admit that gods exist; should they refuse burning incense to the gods, they were to fall under various kinds of torture and death.

II. Amongst the many who triumphed in the army of Christ, the blessed Quirinus, bishop of Siscia, was arrested by order of the magistrate¹⁰⁶ Maximus. 2. As they zealously searched for him and the blessed bishop had sensed this, he fled from the city and, while on the run, he was arrested and brought before the judge. 3. And when the judge Maximus inquired why he had run, bishop Quirinus answered: "I was not running, but fulfilling the commandment of my Lord. It is written to us: *If they persecute you in one city, run to the other.*"

4. Maximus the magistrate said: "Who commands that?"

Bishop Quirinus answered: "Christ, who is true God."

5. Maximus said: "Do you not know that the orders of the emperors could have found you anywhere and, once you were caught, the one you say true God could not have helped you? Just as you were now caught trying to escape and you were brought before me?"

Bishop Quirinus answered: "He is always with us, and, wherever we may be, the Lord whom we worship can help us. For even as I was being arrested he was with me; *and he is here with me, comforting me*; and he is himself answering you from my lips."

¹⁰⁴ "Apices" is used here in technical sense, of "rescript" (letters containing imperial legislation). See *ThesLL* 2:227-228, s.v. "apex."

¹⁰⁵ Literally, "laws of the state."

¹⁰⁶ In the Roman recension Maximus holds the office of *praeses*. However, as seen above, this is an innovation of the Roman recension. In the archetype Maximus had the office of *iuridicus*. The scope of the more general "magistrate," the term given here, encompasses both "governor" and "judge."

6. Maximus dixit: "Multa loqueris, et loquendo magnorum regum instituta differs. Lege ergo diuinos apices, et fac quod iussum est."

7. Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Ego imperatorum tuorum iussionem non audio, quia sacrilega est, et contra Dei praecepta iubet seruos Christi diis uestris immolare, quibus ego non seruio quia nihil sunt. Deus autem meus, cui seruio, ipse est in celo et in terra et in mari: ipse est et in omni loco, omnibus autem superior, quia intra se continet omnia, quoniam per ipsum cuncta facta sunt et in ipso constant uniuersa."

III. Maximus dixit: "Per nimium tempus utendo quasdam fabulas didicisti. Ponuntur tibi thura, et disce deos esse quos nescis: non parum consecuturus es munus intelligentiae, si praeceptis oboediens esse uolueris. Quod si ipse tibi non suaseris ut deuotus appareas, cognosce te subiciendum diuersis iniuriis, etiam morte horribili uitam tuam esse finiendam."

2. Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Iniurias quas mihi minaris gloria est, et promissa mors, si merear, uitam dabit aeternam. Propterea Deo meo deuotus esse cupio, non regibus tuis: neque enim deos credo esse qui non sunt, et aris daemonum thura non pono, quia scio aram esse Dei mei, in qua apta ei sacrificia boni odoris incendi."

3. Maximus dixit: "Video quia te insania cogit ad mortem. Sacrifica diis."

Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Non sacrifico daemoniis, quia scriptum est: *Omnes dii gentium daemonia*, et: *Qui sacrificant diis, eradicabuntur*."

4. Tunc Maximus praeses iussit eum fustibus caedi; cui et dixit: "Respice et agnosce potentes esse deos quibus Romanorum seruit imperium. Propter quod consentiens eris sacerdos magno deo Ioui; alioquin ad Amantii praesidis Primae Pannoniae iudicium dirigeris, a quo dignam sententiam mortis excipias. Ergo a stultitia tua reuersus acquiesce."

5. Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Vere modo sacerdotio fungor, uere modo sacerdos effectus sum, si me ipsum Deo uero sacrificium obtulero. Et hoc quod corpus meum caesum est delector, nullum sentiens dolorem: ideoque offero me maioribus suppliciis, ut me quibus praepositus fui in hac uita sequantur ad illam aeternam uitam, ad quam per huiusmodi iter facile peruenitur."

5/7 ipse – uniuersa: Col 1:16-17; cf. Acts 4:24; Ps 134:6 cum Ws 1:7 || **16** sacrificia – odoris: Ecclus 45:20 || **18/19** Ps 95:5 cum Ex 22:20

2 fac – est: *Pass. Iren.* 4.8; *Pass. Poll.* IV.3; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); cf. *Acta Cypriani* 3.5 (ed. Musurillo, 172.12-13); cf. *Ep. Phileae* 9 (ed. Musurillo, 322.34-36) || **15** deos – sunt: *Acta Cypriani* 1.2 (ed. Musurillo, 170.9) || **18/19** omnes – eradicabuntur: *Pass. Iren.* 2.1; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); *Pass. Phileae* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 344.13-14) || **22** eris – Ioui: cf. *Pass. Theodori* (ed. Delehaye, 35), *Vita Theodoti Ancyrensis* 23 (ed. Franchi de'Cavalieri, 75) || **26** me – obtulero: *Mart. Polycarpi* 14 (ed. Musurillo, 12.28-29); *Mart. Cononis* 6.7 (ed. Musurillo, 192.9-10); *Pass. Felicis* 30 (ed. Musurillo, 270.6-7); *Mart. Dasii* 5.2 (ed. Musurillo, 274.32-34) || **27** nullum – dolorem: cf. *Pass. Iren.* 4.4 || **27/28** offero – suppliciis: cf. *Pass. Iren.* 4.12

6. Maximus said: "You talk too much, and talking you delay fulfilling the decrees of our great kings. Read, therefore, the divine edicts, and do what has been ordered."

7. Bishop Quirinus answered: "I do not hear the order of your emperors, for it is sacrilegious and orders against the commandments of God that the servants of Christ sacrifice to your gods, whom I do not serve, because they are nothing. But my God, whom I serve – he is in heaven and on the earth and in the sea: he is in every place, yet is greater than all, for he contains all within himself, because all were made by him, and in him exists everything."

III. Maximus said: "Idling for too long, you learned some stories. You are given incense, now learn that the gods you [claim you] don't know of do exist: you would achieve a great degree of intelligence if you were willing to obey the precepts. But if you cannot bring yourself to show devotion, rest assured that you shall be put under various tortures, and even your life should end in horrible death."

2. Bishop Quirinus answered: "The tortures with which you threaten me are my glory, and the promised death, should I be found worthy, will grant me eternal life. Therefore, I wish to be devout to my God, not to your kings: nor do I believe there are gods who do not exist, and I do not offer incense on the altars of demons, for I know the real altar is that of my God, on which I lit suitable sacrifices of fragrance."

3. Maximus said: "I see that madness prompts you to death. Offer sacrifice to the gods!"

Bishop Quirinus answered: "I do not offer sacrifice to demons, for it is written: *All the gods of the nations are demons*, and: *Those who sacrifice to the gods shall be extinguished*."

4. Then Maximus the judge ordered he be whipped; and he said to him: "Recant and acknowledge that the gods whom the empire of the Romans serves are powerful. If you consent to this, you shall be the priest of the great god Jupiter.¹⁰⁷ Otherwise, you shall be directed to the tribunal of Amantius, the governor of Pannonia Prima, from whom you shall receive the appropriate death penalty. Therefore turn from your stupidity, submit!"

5. Bishop Quirinus answered: "Indeed, I truly fulfil [my duties related to] priesthood, indeed, I truly become a priest if I offer myself as a sacrifice to the true God. And I rejoice in that my body is beaten, not feeling any pain: For this reason, I offer myself to greater tortures, so that those whom I led in this life may follow me to that eternal life which can be easily attained through such path."

¹⁰⁷ On the promise of pagan sacerdotal dignities in exchange for offering sacrifice, see Johan Leemans, "Hagiography and Historical-Critical Analysis: The Earliest Layer of the Dossier of Theodore the Recruit (BHG 1760 and 1761)," in *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Antique Christianity: Festschrift Boudewijn Dehandschutter*, ed. Johan Leemans, BETL 241 (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 155.

IV. Maximus praeses dixit: "Claudatur in carcere et grauetur catenis, donec sobrius efficiatur."

Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Non expauesco carcerem, credens Dominum meum mecum esse in carcere, qui semper est cum suis cultoribus."

5 2. Cumque ligatus fuisset, recluditur in carcerem Quirinus episcopus, et mittens se in orationem dixit: "Gratias tibi ago, Domine, quia propter te haec mihi illatae sunt contumeliae; et rogo ut qui in hoc carcere detinentur sentiant me cultorem ueri Dei esse, et credant quia non est alius deus nisi tu."

10 3. Media autem nocte apparuit splendor magnus in carcere. Quem cum uidisset Marcellus custos personarum aperuit carcerem et prostrauit se ad pedes beati Quirini episcopi dicens cum lacrimis: "Ora pro me, domine, quia credo non esse alium deum nisi quem tu colis." 4. Multa autem hortatus est eum beatus episcopus, et consignauit eum in nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi.

15 V. Post triduum autem Maximus Quirinum episcopum iussit ad Amantium praesidem ad Primam Pannoniam deduci, ut pro contumacia quam in leges imperatorum exhibuerat ultimam sententiam sustineret. 2. Cumque deductus fuisset beatus Quirinus ad Primam Pannoniam et per singulas ciuitates uinctus catenis ad praesidis Amantii iudicium traheretur [siquidem ad ripam Danubii ad singulas ciuitates], Amantio eodem die reuertente de ciuitate Scarabetensi, offertur ei beatus
20 Quirinus episcopus. Quem praeses ad urbem Sabariensem ad audiendum censuit repedari. 3. Tunc ingredienti ad sanctum Quirinum episcopum christianae mulieres cibum potumque obtulerunt ei; quarum fidem intuens beatus episcopus, dum ea quae offerunt benedicit, catenae quibus ligatae manus eius et pedes fuerant ceciderunt. 4.
25 Accepta igitur esca, regressis mulieribus, hi qui eum custodiebant Sabariam deduxerunt. Quem praeses Amantius per officium suum offerri sibi iussit in theatrum. 5. Qui cum oblatus fuisset, Amantius praeses dixit: "Requiro a te si ea quae in Siscia apud iuredicum Maximum gesta monstrantur uera sunt."

30 Quirinus episcopus respondit: "Apud Sisciam uerum Deum confessus sum. Ipsum semper colui, ipsum corde teneo: nec me ab eodem, qui unus Deus et uerus est, homo poterit separare."

6. Amantius praeses dixit: "Aetatem tuam dolemus iaculari uerberibus; tamen sensum tuum optamus emendare sermonibus et praemio promissae uitae corrigere, ut reliquum senectutis tuae tempus iuxta legum imperialium sanctionem diis seruiens perfruaris." 7. Beatus Quirinus episcopus dixit: "Quid de aetate dubitas, quam fides
35 inuiolata reddere potest omnibus suppliciis fortiolem? Nec tormentis frangitur mea

9 media nocte: cf. *Pass. Iren.* 4.1 || 25 offerri sibi: cf. *Pass. Poll.* II.3; *Acta Cypriani* 3.2 (ed. Musurillo, 172.6)

IV. The judge Maximus said: "Let him be cast in prison and locked in chains until he sobers up!"

Bishop Quirinus answered: "I do not fear prison, believing that my Lord is with me in prison, he who is always with his worshipers."² After he had been chained, bishop Quirinus was locked up in prison. And he fell in prayer and said: "I thank you, Lord, that these tribulations are inflicted upon me on your account. And I pray that those who are held in this prison realise I am a worshiper of the true God, and believe that there is no other God than you."

3. Now in the middle of the night a great light appeared in the prison. When Marcellus, the prison ward, saw this, he opened the cell door and cast himself at the feet of the blessed bishop Quirinus, saying with tears: "Pray for me, my lord, for I believe there is no other God than the one you worship." 4. And the blessed bishop gave him many encouragements, and marked him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V. After a space of three days, Maximus ordered that bishop Quirinus be brought to Amantius, the governor, to Pannonia Prima, so that he may receive the capital judgment for the defiance he showed against the laws of the emperors. 2. The blessed Quirinus was dispatched to Pannonia Prima, and he was being carried in chains from town to town to the tribunal of the governor Amantius [even unto the cities on the bank of the Danube]. Amantius returning on that very day from the town of Scarbantia, the blessed bishop Quirinus was presented to him. The governor decreed that he be brought to Savaria for hearing. 3. Then Christian women visited saint Quirinus the bishop, and they brought him food and drink. Sensing their faith, the blessed bishop Quirinus blessed their offerings, and the chains which bound his hands and legs fell off. 4. When he took the food and the women went away, those who kept guard on him took him to Savaria. The governor Amantius ordered he be presented by the officer in the theatre. 5. After he was brought in, the governor Amantius said: "I ask you if the acts taken in Siscia in the office of the judge Maximus are true."

Bishop Quirinus answered: "At Siscia I confessed the true God. Him I always worshipped, him I hold in my heart: and no man can separate me from him who is the one and true God."

6. The governor Amantius said: "Delivering you to lashes grieves us on account of your age. Thus, we choose to correct your attitude with words, and set it right by granting you continued life,¹⁰⁸ so that you may enjoy to the fullest the rest of your old age by serving the gods in accordance with the dictates of imperial laws." 7. The blessed bishop Quirinus said: "Why do you hesitate on account of my age, which an uninjured faith can render stronger than any torture? Torments shall not

¹⁰⁸ In the sense that Quirinus would be absolved from the incumbering death penalty if he performed the required sacrifice.

confessio, nec uitae praesentis delectatione corrigitur, nec timore mortis, quamuis acerbae, mentis meae soliditas perturbatur.”

5 **VI.** Amantius praeses dixit: “Cur instans es ad mortem, ut diis et Romano imperio appareas indeuotus et contra humanum morem uitam tibi eligas denegandam? 2. Dum hii qui euadere mortem cupiunt negando quae gesserunt tormenta deludunt, tu autem dicis uitae tuae dulcedinem odiosam, et festinus curris ad mortem, imperatoribus contradicis. Propter quod adhuc te hortamur ut uiuas, et uitam tuam redimas, et cultorem te legibus Romanis exhibeas.” 3. Quirinus episcopus dixit: “Allocutio ista si forte flectat animos pueriles, qui longiori uitae suspirant, ego 10 autem didici a Deo meo ut debeam ad illam uitam peruenire quae post mortem mortis intercessione non clauditur; et ideo ad temporalis huius uitae terminum fidelis accedo. 4. Non enim similis sum noxiorum, sicut potestas tua loquitur: illi enim, dum uiuere cupiunt, negando Deum uere moriuntur, ego autem ad aeternitatem uitae confitendo peruenio; nec uestris legibus acquiesco, quia Christi Dei mei legitima, quae 15 fidelibus praedicaui, custodio.” 5. Amantius praeses dixit: “Diu te ad oboedientiam regaliū praeceptorum inclinare uoluimus; sed quia rigor mentis domari non potuit, eris in exemplum omnium christianorum, ut formam tuae mortis qui uiuere cupiunt expauescant.”

20 **VII.** Tunc inter ceteras quas pertulit passiones iussit sancto Dei sacerdoti uel famulo molam ad collum ligari, et in fluuii Sabari undas demergi. 2. Cumque de ponte praecipitatus fuisset in fluuium et diutissime supernataret, cum spectantibus collocutus est ne suo terrerentur exemplo, uix orans ut mergeretur obtinuit. 3. Cuius corpus non longe ab eodem loco ubi demersum fuerat inuentum est, ubi etiam et locus orationis habetur. 4. Sed ipsum sanctum corpus in basilicam ad Scarabetensem 25 portam est depositum, ubi maior est pro meritis eius frequentia procedendi. 5. Passus est autem beatus Quirinus episcopus Siscianus martyr Christi sub die pridie Nonarum Iuniarum, et coronatus est a Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria et potestas in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

30 **VIII.** Facta autem incursione barbarorum in partes Pannoniae, populus christianus de Scarabetensi urbe Romam fugiens, sanctum corpus beati Quirini episcopi et martyris auferentes secum duxerunt. 2. Quem uia Appia miliario tertio sepelierunt in basilica apostolorum, ubi corpora principum apostolorum aliquando iacuerunt [id est Petri et Pauli], ubi et sanctus Sebastianus martyr requiescit, in loco qui dicitur Catacumbas, aedificantes nomini eius dignam ecclesiam, ubi praestantur 35 beneficia eius usque in hodiernum diem.

14/15 legitima – custodio: *Pass. Fructuosi* 6.3 (ed. Musurillo, 162.18-21) || 16 regaliū praeceptorum: *Pass. Iren.* 4.11; *Pass. Iuli* 3 (ed. Musurillo, 264.4)

break my confession, nor shall it be altered for the enjoyments of this life, nor shall fear of death, as harsh as it may be, disturb the determination of my mind.”

VI. The governor Amantius said: “Why do you hasten to death with the purpose of appearing disloyal to the Roman empire? And why do you choose, against human habit, to deny your life? 2. Whilst those who wish to evade death escape torture by denying what they had done, you say instead that the sweetness of your life is hateful, and you run swiftly to death, gainsaying the emperors. Because of this we urge you again to live, and save your life, and show yourself to be an observer of the Roman laws.”

3. Bishop Quirinus said: “This speech might bend perhaps childish souls, who aspire to a longer life. I, however, was taught by my God that I ought to achieve that life which, after death, does not end by the intervention of death. And therefore I approach the end of this life with faith. 4. For I am not like the wrongdoers, as your excellence says: For, although these wish to live, by denying God they in fact die. I, on the other hand, am approaching the eternal life with my confession; and I do not submit to your laws, because I keep the laws of Christ, my God, which I preached to the faithful.”

5. The governor Amantius said: “Long have we tried to incline you to obeying the royal precepts; but because the obstinacy of your mind could not be tamed, you shall be made an example for all Christians, that the way you die may scare those who wish to live.”

VII. Then, among other sufferings the holy priest and servant of God was sentenced to endure, [Amantius] ordered that a millstone be tied to his neck, and he be drowned in the waves of the river Sibaris. 2. When he was cast from the bridge into the river and was floating for a long time, he conversed with the onlookers, urging them not to be overcome by his example. At length, after he prayed to be allowed to submerge, he obtained death. 3. His body was found a short distance from where he had drowned, where there is also a place of prayer.¹⁰⁹ 4. But the holy body itself was laid to rest in a church near the Scarbantian gate, more frequented on account of his intercession. 5. Now the blessed Quirinus, bishop of Siscia, martyr of Christ, suffered on the fourth of June, and was crowned by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom honour and glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

VIII. But when barbarians raided across Pannonia, and Christians fled from the town of Scarbantia to Rome, they lifted the holy relics of the blessed bishop and martyr Quirinus and took it with them. 2. They buried it at the third milestone on the Via Appia, in the church of the apostles, where the relics of the princes of the apostles [that is, Peter and Paul] once rested, where saint Sebastianus also rests – in the place called Catacombs. They built there a church worthy of his name, in which his gifts are offered even unto this day.

¹⁰⁹ Signifying most probably an *oratorium*.

3. MARTYRDOM AND EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY: A COMMENTARY ON THE *PASSIO QUIRINI*

The first part of this chapter was dedicated to a historical-textual evaluation of the *Passio Quirini*. The following pages seek to highlight its literary-theological contribution, to observe the theology of martyrdom reflected in the text and its message to the target-audience (late fourth – early fifth-century Pannonians) and the broader late antique audience. In order to render this presentation efficient, I shall provide a summary of the *Passio*, focusing on theological-literary aspects.

A lengthy prologue spells out the aim of the persecution: to coerce the Christian clergy to sacrifice under threat of torture and execution.¹¹⁰ Here, as mentioned, we find significant differences between the two recensions of the *passio*. Where the *recensio Romana* focusses on the agency of imperial authorities (emperors and provincial magistrates) instigated by the devil, the older prologue of the *recensio Aquileiensis* emphasises the devil as the orchestrator of the persecution. Ultimately, the aim of the persecution is to test the resolve – in martyrial language, the steadfastness – of Christians.¹¹¹ Thus, the scene on which the martyrdom of Quirinus unfurls is that of a cosmic struggle between the devil and his minions on one hand, and the Christian saints, on the other, with a salvific dimension. And surely, the martyrdom of Quirinus is narrated as a series of tests punctured by agonistic language.

In chapter II, the attention shifts to Quirinus, bishop of Siscia. Strong agonistic language depicts him from the first line as one of the soldiers of Christ, who brought about the triumphant victory of the Christian army: “inter multos autem qui Christi exercitum triumphabant.”¹¹² This comment, however, stands in apparent contradiction with the following episode. We are told that, sensing his imminent arrest, Quirinus first attempted to flee – a vain hope of escape, as he was soon captured. During the interrogation, Quirinus motivated his conduct with a reference to Mt 10:23: *If they persecute you in one city, flee to the other*.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Although the *passio* mentions the closing of churches and the general sacrifice required of all Christians, the focus clearly rests on clergy.

¹¹¹ *Pass. Quir.* I.1: “ad cribrandas sanctorum animas accepisset potestatem.”

¹¹² *Pass. Quir.* II.1.

¹¹³ *Pass. Quir.* II.2-3.

3.1. Flight from Persecution

Flight from persecution as an accepted action might be strange at first sight in a hagiographic text. After all, martyrs became famous precisely for the intransigence they showed in assuming publicly their Christian identity. Despite this fact, an entire stream of hagiographic narratives tells us of martyrs who went into hiding before their arrest. To mention but a few illustrious examples: Polycarp retreats to a country estate at the advice of his entourage; it is there that he receives a revelation of his impending martyrdom.¹¹⁴ The acts of Agape, Chione and Eirene stress that the three women sought refuge in the mountains, complying with God's commandment.¹¹⁵ In another hagiographic narrative analysed in this work, *Passio Sereni*, the protagonist survived the worst of the persecution by going into hiding.¹¹⁶

But perhaps the most famous example of a martyr who successfully fled a persecution was Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage. Cyprian subsequently went at great lengths to present his flight as a legitimate course of action, as did other Early Christian theologians such as Clement, Origen, Athanasius, or Lactantius.¹¹⁷ Mt 10:23 took centre stage in their argumentation. The general line of thought is that flight from persecution is an acceptable alternative to martyrdom, as long as it is done for the sake of others, and as long as the refugee, if discovered, ends up doing the right thing – that is, confessing to be a Christian.

It must be mentioned that the theme of flight from persecution does not stand alone in the *Passio Quirini*; instead, it represents the first element of a theology of martyrdom which stresses strict conformity to the Lord's commandments in every aspect of life, martyrdom included. This becomes especially visible in the dialogue between Quirinus and the magistrate Maximus, in Siscia. The hearing has an almost catechetical undertone. At Maximus' remark, that Christ is not a true god, because he was unable to assist the bishop in his flight, Quirinus retorts that the Lord always assists Christians, even in their tribulations. Christ was present both when Quirinus attempted to escape and when he was caught. He is present even at the hearing. In fact, it is Christ who speaks through Quirinus.¹¹⁸ Beyond assurances of divine assistance and favour, this retort also formulates the martyr's conformity to Christ, namely that Quirinus is a perfect *imitator Christi*. This aspect is another stock-motif which the *Passio Quirini* shares with other martyr-texts, such as the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ *Mart. Polycarpi* 5 (ed. Musurillo, 4.28-6.1).

¹¹⁵ *Mart. Agapis, Eirenis et Chionis* 1.3 (ed. Musurillo, 280.15-20).

¹¹⁶ *Pass. Sereni* 1.2. Cf. below, section IV.3.2.

¹¹⁷ See Leemans, "The Idea of Flight," 901-910; Nicholson, "Flight from Persecution," 48-63.

¹¹⁸ *Pass. Quir.* II.5.

¹¹⁹ *Mart. Perpetuae* 15.6 (ed. Musurillo, 122.30-124.1).

In terms of his episcopal vocation, Quirinus presents himself in this episode as an authoritative interpreter of Scriptures, as an authoritative spokesperson for Christ and for the Christian community in general. Important to note is that this authority places him, in the eye of the redactor, on equal ground with the persecuting magistrate: Quirinus is polemicizing, even theologizing with Maximus, but not in a traditional apologetic form. Rather, he is boldly, even insolently defying the *iuridicus*.¹²⁰ The rest of the *Passio Quirini* will develop in this spirit. Quirinus' every word is meant to serve as an example for Christians.

3.2. The Exemplary Bishop

When asked to sacrifice to the pagan gods, Quirinus refuses, invoking Ex 22:20, *Who sacrifices to the gods and not to God, shall be utterly destroyed*.¹²¹ We encounter this reference in Pannonian hagiographies, but also in other texts, being one of the preferred Scriptural legitimations for the martyrs' refusal to offer sacrifice to pagan gods.¹²² Quirinus, too, is encouraged by this word to remain steadfast in the faith, a fact that will grant him the eternal life. Maximus then promises to make him a flamen in exchange for offering sacrifice. The bishop retorts with a complex answer: "Indeed, I truly fulfil my duties related to priesthood, indeed, I truly become a priest if I offer myself as a sacrifice to the true God."¹²³ Earlier he claimed: "I know the real altar is that of my God, on which I lit suitable sacrifices of fragrance."¹²⁴ Quirinus considers martyrdom as the ultimate offering to God. In that he does not differ from other martyrs, who also viewed themselves as a sacrifice offered to the true God.¹²⁵

Quirinus, however, construes his sacrificial self-perception around his ecclesiastical office. The key-term here is "sacerdos."¹²⁶ Certainly, the reader / audience of the *Passio Quirini* might have interpreted these statements as yet another element of the *imitatio Christi*. By giving himself up for Christ's sake, Quirinus imitates the true priest, Christ, who gave himself up for our sake. However, in the background of these statements stands the ministerial symbolism and function of Christ's sacrifice as mediated and transmitted through the "sacerdos" and ultimately through the bishop. In this sense, Quirinus becomes indeed a mediator between Christians and God. Martyrdom is, for him, the accomplishment of his episcopal vocation. By refusing a pagan priesthood, he achieves true priesthood, since he

¹²⁰ *Pass. Quir.* II.7.

¹²¹ *Pass. Quir.* III.3.

¹²² For references, see above the apparatus *ad loc.*

¹²³ *Pass. Quir.* III.5.

¹²⁴ *Pass. Quir.* III.2.

¹²⁵ E.g., *Mart. Dasii* 5.2 (ed. Musurillo, 274.32-34); *Pass. Felicis* 30 (ed. Musurillo, 270.6-7); *Mart. Cononis* 6.7 (ed. Musurillo, 192.9-10). On martyrdom as sacrifice, see Moss, *The Other Christs*, 83-87.

¹²⁶ On this, see Hajnalka Tamas, "Martyrdom and Episcopal Authority: The Bishop-Martyr in Pannonian Hagiography," in *Tradition and Transformation: Dissent and Consent in the Mediterranean. Proceedings of the 3rd CEMS International Graduate Conference*, ed. Mihail Mitrea (Kiel: Solivagus, 2016), 86-87.

becomes a sacrifice to God. Quirinus' self-awareness is noteworthy. Even if he does not express it, the text suggests clearly that from the moment the bishop declared publicly his faith, he has "set fire"¹²⁷ to the sacrifice he would eventually become: He has engaged definitively on the path to martyrdom.

Moreover, Quirinus asks for harsher tortures, so that his flock might witness through what an easy path one can reach eternal life. This is another stock-motif that we encounter in hagiographic texts. A ready example is the *Passio Irenaei*, where Irenaeus asks the *praeses* to fulfil his threats and subject him to more torture.¹²⁸ Martyrdom as example for other Christians is a commonplace of hagiographic literature. If initially it was meant to prepare Christians for the ever looming prospect of persecution and martyrdom, in Late Antiquity the function of this stock-motif changed to present the martyr as the embodiment of genuine Christian spirituality: A spirituality focused on salvation and eternal life, instead of "temporal" benefits.

At this point in the narrative, the exhausted Maximus orders that Quirinus be thrown into prison. While there, the bishop baptizes the prison ward, Marcellus. After some time, he is sent to Savaria, to the governor ("praeses") Amantius. The governor is to pronounce the capital punishment. On the way, Quirinus receives alms from some Christian women, which he blesses when the chains binding his hands and feet fall. This gesture, like the act of baptising Marcellus, conveys the meaning that Quirinus is a fully dedicated bishop, who gives precedence to his flock and his episcopal responsibilities even under duress. The episode is of great import in completing the model of the authoritative bishop that transpires from the *Passio Quirini*. It is nothing less than the contemporaries of this hagiography would have demanded. As Roberts stated about the expectations of late antique communities from their bishops, "[t]he office of bishop finds model and legitimation in those of its number who during the time of the persecutions continued to lead, instruct and preach to the very end."¹²⁹

In Savaria too, Quirinus shows the same stubbornness: His old age should not be an impediment in suffering torture, because faith strengthens him.¹³⁰ He will not submit to temporal laws, because he wishes to remain constant to the laws of God, which he had taught.¹³¹ In this portrait, the bishop is not only a teacher by word, but also a teacher by deed. He guarantees the correctness of the doctrine and ethos taught (orthodoxy and orthopraxis). Interesting is the phrase "Christi Dei mei legitima," by which the bishop clearly states that the only law he is willing to acknowledge is the Christian code. His radically rebellious attitude sets him against

¹²⁷ *Pass. Quir.* III.2: "incendi."

¹²⁸ *Pass. Iren.* 4.12: "Multifarias minas tuas et tormenta plurima expectabam (...). Vnde hoc facias oro ut cognoscas quemadmodum Christiani propter fidem quae est in Deo mortem contemnere consueuerunt."

¹²⁹ Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 112.

¹³⁰ *Pass. Quir.* V.7.

¹³¹ *Pass. Quir.* VI.4.

all secular authority: Quirinus rejects imperial legislation altogether, considering it sacrilegious in its entirety.¹³² If another Pannonian hagiography, the *Passio Pollionis*, makes allowances for a modicum of just rule,¹³³ in the *Passio Quirini* this is not the case. The hearing can be pictured almost as a clash between two co-equal authorities, but on different bases: the authority of imperial legislation on one hand, and the authoritative commandments of God on the other hand.

Finally, faced with this radical constancy, the governor sentences Quirinus to die by drowning. Even then, Quirinus' primary concern is for those who are present at his execution: They must be strengthened in faith, encouraged to remain constant, not to be overcome by his death.¹³⁴ Hardly surprising, since teaching the Christian tenets is one of the dominant features in Quirinus' portrait. All in all, we can also read this text as a handbook of episcopal conduct, in times of peace as well as persecution, both in relation to the Christian community and in relation to adverse secular authorities. Spiritual leader of his community and of the Christian universe at large, the bishop is also their public spokesperson in word and deed. This is explicitated in the *Passio Irenaei*, but the *Passio Quirini* leads in the same direction.¹³⁵ Singled thus out, the bishop's martyrdom vouches for the entire community. Far beyond being merely emblematic, it is also representative for each member of the Church.

3.3. The Bishop and the Christian Community

This solidarity between the bishop and the Church has deep roots in hagiographic literature. A parallel is found already in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where we are told that

[j]ust as the Lord did, he [= Polycarp] too waited that he might be delivered up, that we might become his imitators (...) For it is a mark of true and solid love to desire not only one's own salvation, but also that of all the brothers.¹³⁶

That such solidary and protective attitude towards the community was expected of a bishop, especially of a martyr-bishop, is well-exemplified in Prudentius' *Peristephanon VII* and in other hymns of the same collection. As Roberts termed it, "A bishop-martyr continues his protection of his city even after death. At the same time, the special access to heaven he then enjoys makes him an effective intercessor for Christians everywhere. (...) Martyrdom generalizes the bishops' power and makes it available to the entire Christian community."¹³⁷ In view of this, Quirinus may have

¹³² Cf. Tamas, "Martyrdom," 85-86.

¹³³ *Pass. Poll.* III.9: "regibus iusta praecipientibus oboedire."

¹³⁴ *Pass. Quir.* VII.2.

¹³⁵ *Pass. Iren.* 5.4: "productus de ecclesia tua catholica."

¹³⁶ *Mart. Polycarpi* 1 (ed. Musurillo, 3.11-15).

¹³⁷ Roberts, *Poetry*, 113.

been adopted as the spiritual father of the community in Savaria, especially if it was understood that Christians of Savaria were present when he was being martyred.

These words offer us one of the reasons behind the martyr's death: an earnest desire to imitate Christ and, by doing so, to become the model imitated by others. In his very first reply, Quirinus stresses that Christ speaks through him. The image suggests a perfect harmony between Christ and the bishop. In Quirinus, Christ resumes his deeds for the salvation of mankind, bringing the sacrificial metaphor to its full bearing. The passages referred to above from the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Martyrium Polycarpi* already hint at this perception. A closer parallel can be found in the prayer of Felix, another bishop-martyr:

Deus, gratias tibi, quinquaginta et sex annos habeo in hoc saeculo, uirginitatem custodiui, euangelia seruau, fidem et ueritatem predicaui. Domine Deus caeli et terrae, Iesu Christe, tibi ceruicem meam ad uictimam flecto, qui permanes in aeternum.¹³⁸

However, the *Passio Quirini* exceeds this view of the sacrifice as merely imitating Christ's sacrifice. Instead, the sacrificial theme presents the bishop as the successor of Christ the true Priest, as continuing that mediation between God and man which had been restored by Christ. Following the bishop, one follows practically Christ, since the bishop is the perfect imitator of Christ. Thus, the *Passio Quirini* is not only a handbook of episcopal conduct, but also an advocate of a rather strict episcopal authority, an essential tenet in the tumultuous doctrinal debates of Late Antiquity.

¹³⁸ *Pass. Felicis* 30 (Musurillo 271.5-8).

CHAPTER II

Irenaeus of Sirmium (BHL 4466)

1. HAGIOGRAPHIC DOSSIER

Irenaeus, bishop of Sirmium, is perhaps the most famous Pannonian martyr. His cult was celebrated both in the Eastern and the Western parts of the Roman empire. He is the only martyr from the region whose *Passio* is extant in a Latin (BHL 4466) and a Greek version (BHG² 948-951). It seems both versions were composed at a relatively early date. The *Passio Irenaei* had a longstanding reputation as an authentic document, which led to its inclusion in authoritative collections of hagiographic text-editions and translations¹ – the only narrative of the corpus studied here to be granted this privilege.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Irenaeus's popularity exceeded by far that of other Pannonian martyrs. According to the list catalogued by François Dolbeau, who elaborated the first critical edition of the Latin *Passio Irenaei*, the text is extant in more than 40 manuscripts.² The Greek *passio*, in turn, survived in five manuscripts, corresponding to three recensions in which the identity of the martyr was progressively transformed (BHG 948, 949, and 951, respectively). In addition, the hagiography of Irenaeus of Sirmium was translated / excerpted in Church Slavonic, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopian.³ The association of Irenaeus of Sirmium, viz. confusion, with saint Irenaeus of Lyon, which must have occurred relatively early and might be explained by the identity of name, undoubtedly played an important role in the history of this martyr's cult.

Whether the Christian community of Sirmium had indeed, at the beginning of the fourth century, a bishop named Irenaeus, is impossible to determine. Since no

¹ See below a list of editions and translations (section II.2.4).

² Dolbeau, "Le dossier," 208-209.

³ BHBS 508; BHO 537. On the relationship between the Latin and the three Greek recensions of the *passio*, see Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić and Ifigenija Draganić, "Latin and Greek Recensions of the *Passion of St. Irenaeus of Sirmium*," in *Constantine, Sirmium, and Early Christianity (International Symposium Proceedings)*, ed. Nenad Lemajić (Sremska Mitrovica: Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments Sremska Mitrovica, 2014), 25-45. On the hagiography of Irenaeus in medieval East, see the doctoral dissertation of Marijana Vuković, *Martyr Memories: The Afterlife of the Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium between East and West in Medieval Hagiographical Collections (Eighth – Eleventh Centuries)* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, CEU, Budapest, 2015); Marijana Vuković, "Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium in the 10th-Century Codex Suprasliensis," *Старобългарска литература* 47 (2013): 60-73; Boris Stojkovski, "The Life of Saint Irenaeus of Sirmium in the Ethiopian Synaxarium," in Lemajić, *Constantine*, 66-72.

authentic episcopal list survived, one can at best surmise that the memory of the bishop and martyr Irenaeus, attested in liturgical and archaeological sources, refers indeed to a historical person. This is the assumption modern scholars made in their tentative reconstructions of Sirmium's episcopal *fasti*.⁴

1.1. Late Antique Martyrological Sources

When examining late antique martyrologies, we find that Irenaeus is better documented in the Greek ones than in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, the quintessential martyrology for the Latin speaking world. This is somewhat puzzling, considering that the martyrdom of Irenaeus “made career” in Latin: As mentioned above, the several dozen manuscripts conserve a relatively homogeneous recension, compared to the small number of Greek manuscripts. These, in turn, have considerable internal differences. Moreover, the source of the *Hieronymianum*'s eulogy is demonstrably the Greek martyrology from which the *Martyrologium Syriacum* was excerpted.

The oldest extant martyrology to mention the celebration of Irenaeus is the early fifth-century *Martyrologium Syriacum*:

ad 6. apr.: Ἐν Σιρμίῳ τῇ πόλει Εἰρηναῖος ἐπίσκοπος, καὶ ἐν Νικομηδεῖα Κυριακὴ⁵

The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* contains essentially the same note, albeit corrupted in places. This suggests it must derive from the common Greek model of the two martyrologies. The textual transmission of the *Hieronymianum*'s eulogy for this date is complicated, with traceable contaminations in place-names, and corruptions in the martyr's name.⁶ The text, on one hand as established by De Rossi and Duchesne, and on the other hand as reconstructed by Delehaye reads:

ad 6. apr.: Nicomedia Firmi Berenei ep[iscop]i... Quiriaci (Duchesne and De Rossi)
Sirmi Herenei episcopi (Delehaye)⁷

⁴ Among the scholars who sought to reconstruct the Sirmian episcopal list – to the extent sources allow –, see Zeiller, *Les origines*, 143-147; Noël Duval, “Sirmium, ‘ville impériale’ ou ‘capitale?’” in *XXVI corso di cultura sull'arte Ravennate e Bizantina: Ravenna, 6/18 maggio 1979* (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1979), 81; Петар Милошевић, *Археологија и историја Сирмијума* (Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 2001), 203; Miroslava Mirković, *Sirmium: istorija rimskog grada od I do kraja VI veka* (Sremska Mitrovica and Belgrade: Blago Sirmijuma and Filozofski Fakultet, 2006), 117-118.

⁵ De Rossi and Duchesne, *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, LV. The Syriac original (in the edition of Nau) is cited with an English translation by Sergey Minov, “Record E01468,” *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01468> (accessed on 01.03.2021).

⁶ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 6 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 40): Eptern. *nicom[ediae] sirmi herenei ep[iscop]i... kyriaci*; Rich. *Syrmia herenei ep[iscop]i*; Wissenb. *In nicomedia firmi herenei ep[iscop]i... quiriaci*; S. *bereni*; C. *henei*; L. *hermei*.

⁷ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 6 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 40); Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 177.

The *Hieronymianum* not only corrupted the name of the place, Sirmium, but transformed it into a proper name, considering *Firmi* or *Sirmi* a martyr. Once Sirmium was eliminated as the place of cult, all martyrs, not just Kyriakos, were attributed to Nicomedia. In other branches of the textual transmission, too, the name *Irenaeus* varies from the more faithful rendering *Herenei* to *Hermei* or *Bereni*.

In his commentary on the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, Delehaye thought to have recognised another entry commemorating the bishop of Sirmium. In the first of the *Hieronymianum*'s three main manuscript families the note is included on the 22nd of August (Bern.); in the other two, the date is the 23rd of August. The entry reads as follows:

ad 23. aug. [Eptern.]: Sirti Marcialis Hermogerati Habundi Innocenti Mirendini...⁸

Delehaye conjectured that instead of *Sirti* one should read *Sirmi*, and that Irenaeus' name was dropped on account of the confusion with the Roman Irenaeus, who is also remembered on this date, under the form *Mirendini*.⁹ The latter form, in turn, resulted from the contamination of *Irenaei* with *Minervini*, another name inscribed in the martyrology on the 22nd /23rd of August.¹⁰ In sum, Delehaye suggests that the *Hieronymianum* originally commemorated Irenaeus of Sirmium also on the 23rd of August. However, since the martyr's feast-day in the Latin medieval world was established to the 6th of April, the note on the 23rd of August lost importance and consequently suffered various contaminations and corruptions. The saint's name, now considered a repetition, was soon dropped, and the place, Sirmium, was transformed into a personal name, thereby creating a new martyr.

Delehaye's chief argument to posit Irenaeus' celebration on the 23rd of August is his commemoration on this date in the Greek *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*.¹¹ This Greek eulogy is much more accurate and more detailed, summarizing concisely the story of Irenaeus' martyrdom:

ad 23. aug.: Καὶ ἀθλησὶς τοῦ ἁγίου ἱερομάρτυρος Εἰρηναίου ἐπισκόπου Σιρμίου. Οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Διοκλητιανοῦ· καὶ κρατηθεὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ Σιρμίου ἤχθη εἰς Παννονίαν καὶ παρέστη Πρόβω τῷ ἡγεμόνι, ὁμολογῶν καὶ κηρύττων τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν τὸν ἀληθινὸν Θεὸν πίστιν. Διὸ κατακλείεται φρουρᾷ· καὶ ἐξαχθεὶς μαστίζεται, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα λαβὼν τὴν ἀπόφασιν ξίφει τὴν κεφαλὴν τμηθεὶς ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ ῥίπτεται Σάω· καὶ οὕτως ἐτελειώθη αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία.¹²

⁸ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 23 aug. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 109): Bern. [ad 22 aug.] *Sixti*; Wissenb. *xisti... merendini*; M. *xysti*; V. *sixti*; C. *mierendini*. I quoted Eptern. and gave Bern. as a variant because this version shows best the corruption, and Delehaye made his observations on this version.

⁹ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 459n22.

¹⁰ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 460n32.

¹¹ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 459n22. Cf. the Armenian synaxary of Gregory VII, where Irenaeus is celebrated on the 23rd of August.

¹² *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 23. aug. (ed. Delehaye, 917.3-12). "And the contest of the most holy martyr saint Irenaeus, bishop of Sirmium. He became saint during the reign of Diocletian. Arrested,

One should also add that in the Greek versions of the *Passio Irenaei*, the date of his martyrdom alternates between the 22nd and the 23rd of August. Irenaeus' celebration in the Greek synaxaries on the 23rd of August can be explained by association with the more famous Irenaeus of Lyon, whose feast-day fell precisely on this date (in the synaxaries, the bishop of Lyon is commemorated immediately after Irenaeus of Sirmium).¹³ This displacement must have occurred in the tenth-eleventh century, as several Greek calendars of the eleventh century celebrate the martyred bishop of Sirmium both on the 26th of March (in Marijana Vuković's words, a transitional phase) and on the 23rd of August.¹⁴

Finally, scholars believe that the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* commemorates Irenaeus on another date, the 29th of April:

ad 29. apr.: Καὶ [ἄθλησις] τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Ἐρμαίου τοῦ ἐν τῷ Σιρμίῳ.¹⁵

Zeiller, and, following him, Hippolyte Delehaye advanced the thesis that the form Ἐρμαίου should be read Εἰρηναίου.¹⁶ They explained the date in connection to the *Passio Pollionis*, where Irenaeus is mentioned by name and the story of his martyrdom concisely summarised.¹⁷ In the Latin West, Pollio's feast-day fell on the 28th of April. The synaxarist, who either knew the *Passio Pollionis* or some tradition concerning Pollio in which the two Pannonian saints were associated, may well have inserted Irenaeus' name on the following day, the 29th of April.

1.2. Medieval Liturgical Sources

Medieval liturgical sources offer even more variations on the date of Irenaeus' celebration.

he was brought from Sirmium to Pannonia and was presented to the governor Probus, where he confessed and proclaimed his faith in Christ, the true God. For this reason he was locked in prison; brought out, he was flogged, and, after all these, he received the sentence to be thrown into the river Sava after having been decapitated by sword. His martyrdom was thus accomplished." (my translation). The manuscript Paris, BnF 1587 (Delehaye's siglum D) places Irenaeus' eulogy on the 22nd of August, as the result of a chronological slip. The eulogy is slightly revised, but it essentially transmits the same content: "Οὗτος κατὰ τοὺς χρόνους Διοκλητιανοῦ ἐπίσκοπος ἦν Σιρμίῳ· διὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν κατασχεθεὶς ἤχθη εἰς Παννονίαν καὶ παρέστη Πρόβῳ τῷ ἡγεμόνι ὁμολογήσας οὖν τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν ἡμῶν πίστιν, κατακλείεται ἐν φρουρᾷ καὶ ἐξαχθεὶς μαστίζεται· εἶτα δεξιόμενος τὴν ἀπόφασιν, ἐτμήθη τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ἐρρίφη εἰς τὸν Σάον οὕτω λεγόμενον ποταμόν." See *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 23 aug. (ed. Delehaye, 913-916, under "Synaxaria selecta").

¹³ *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 23 aug. (ed. Delehaye, 917.13-30).

¹⁴ Vuković, "Martyrdom," 63.

¹⁵ *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 29 apr. (ed. Delehaye, 640.3-4).

¹⁶ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 33; Hippolyte Delehaye, review of *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'Empire Romain*, by Jacques Zeiller, *AnBoll* 38 (1920): 400. The occurrence is plausible, since at least one witness of the *Hieronymianum* shows the same mistake. Cf. 70n3 above (ms. L: *hermei*).

¹⁷ See *Pass. Poll.* 1.2 and chapter III below; see also section 2.2 of this chapter, on the relationship between the *Passio Pollionis* and the *Passio Irenaei*.

The Eastern martyrological traditions placed Irenaeus' martyrdom on the 23rd of August, following the Greek date established in the tenth century.¹⁸ At the end of the thirteenth century, the cult of Irenaeus is mentioned, alongside that of Irenaeus of Lyon, in the Armenian synaxary compiled by the *catholicos* Gregory VII.¹⁹ Given, however, its restrained usage and influence in geo-chronological terms, Irenaeus' cult did not spread among the Armenians. When the synaxary was compiled anew, it did not contain a eulogy to either of the two Irenaei.²⁰

As for the Ethiopian synaxary, although the date remains the 23rd of August, it seems to draw on earlier Greek *menologia*: The discrepancies in the eulogy of Irenaeus in the Constantinopolitan and the Ethiopian synaxaries suggest that the former could not have been the model of the latter. The Ethiopian synaxary omits the name of the magistrate (Probus), but does refer to the dialogue between the magistrate and Irenaeus, the 'midnight' interrogation, as well as Irenaeus' final prayer, which find their correspondents in the *Passio Irenaei*. I cite here the English translation of Boris Stojkovski:

ad 23 aug.: On this day is also martyr Saint Irenaeus, bishop of Sorem. He was imprisoned in the first hour of the night and taken before the court. The judge said to him: "Make an offering to the gods!" Irenaeus said: "I do not make offerings, because I fear the Lord." The judge ordered to sink him into the river. As he reached the other river bank, he took off his clothes and prayed to the Lord to take his soul, to protect the people who lived in Sirmium and to give peace to his churches, he added: "I believe in you my Lord Jesus Christ, and I call upon you and pray unto you, (even) as I suffer!" Immediately after that, he was thrown into the river and crowned. May his blessing be with us forever and ever. Amen!²¹

In the Latin West, the 25th of March became Irenaeus' stable feast-day.²² This date resulted from a chronological slip: At some point in tradition, *VIII id. apr.*, that is, the 6th of April, was mistakenly read as *VIII kal. apr.*, that is, the 25th of March.²³ The confusion happened perhaps early on, since the 25th of March (or the 'transitional' 26th of March) occurs both in the Western and Eastern medieval calendars.

Writing at the end of the eighth century, the Anonymus Lugdunensis is the first Latin martyrologist to mention the commemoration of Irenaeus of Sirmium. The note

¹⁸ Cf. Vuković, "Martyrdom," 61n6 (Greek, Armenian); Siraphie Der Nersessian, "Le synaxaire Arménien de Grégoire VII d'Anazarbe," *AnBoll* 68 (1950): 284 (Armenian); Stojkovski, "The Life," 69 (Ethiopian).

¹⁹ Der Nersessian, "Le synaxaire Arménien," 269n1.

²⁰ Der Nersessian, "Le synaxaire Arménien," 270.

²¹ Stojkovski, "The Life," 70 (with original text at 69).

²² This is the date adopted by the editors of the *Passio Irenaei* in the ActaSS. See Godefridus Henschenius and Daniel Papebrochius, "De S. Irenaeo episc. et martyre Syrmii in Pannonia," ActaSS Martii, vol. 3 (Antwerpen: Iacobus Meursius, 1668), 555-557. Some of the manuscripts of the *Passio Irenaei* also adopted the date of the 25th of March. For references, see Henschenius and Papebrochius, "De S. Irenaeo," 557nh, and the afferent lemmata in the critical apparatus of Dolbeau, "Le dossier," 213.

²³ See Agostino Amore, "Ireneo," BSS 7 (1966): 899; and A.P. Frutaz, "Eirenaïos v. Sirmium," LThK 3² (1959): 775.

of the Anonymus Lugdunensis was taken over *verbatim* by Florus, Ado,²⁴ and Usuard²⁵ (with minor modifications, touching on the syntax). The *Martyrologium Romanum* offers approximately the same content. Compare:

ad 25. mart.: Apud Syrmium, natale sancti Hirenei episcopi: qui tempore Maximiani imperatoris, sub praeside Probo, primo tormentis acerrimis vexatus, deinde, diebus plurimis in carcere cruciatus, novissime abscisso capite consummatus est.²⁶

ad 25. mart.: Sirmii passio sancti Irenaei, Episcopi et Martyris; qui, tempore Maximiani Imperatoris, sub Praeside Probo, primum... etc.²⁷

1.3. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources

According to the archaeological evidence unearthed thus far, the surroundings of Sirmium hosted two cultic centres dedicated to Irenaeus' memory. The first is located in the Eastern cemetery of Sirmium, on the road to Singidunum. It consists of a cemeterial basilica, around which a Christian burial nucleus developed. The site was in use during the fourth and the fifth centuries, with a higher frequency of burials in the second part of the fourth century.²⁸ The basilica, archaeologically explored starting with 1976, is a rectangular building with a single nave facing East,²⁹ measuring ca 25 x 14 m. To the east an apse and a liturgical annex (vestibule) were added, which prolong the monument with ca 10 meters (total surface: 35 x 14 m).³⁰ The building was authenticated as the cemeterial basilica of Irenaeus on the basis of

²⁴ Dubois and Renaud, *Le martyrologe d'Adon*, 112.

²⁵ Dubois, *Le martyrologe d'Usuard*, 200: "In Syrmio, passio beati Hirenei episcopi, tempore Maximiani imperatoris, qui primo tormentis acerrimis vexatus, deinde diebus plurimis in carcere cruciatus, novissime abscisso capite consummatus est."

²⁶ Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique*, 54.

²⁷ Johnson and Ward, *Martyrologium Romanum*, 72.

²⁸ The site is well researched. Among the more important works, see: Vladislav Popović, "A Survey of the Topography and Urban Organization of Sirmium in the Late Empire," in *Sirmium: Archaeological Investigations in Syrmian Pannonia*, ed. Vladislav Popović, vol. 1 (Belgrade: The Archaeological Institute of Beograd, 1971), 123; Miroslava Mirković, "Sirmium," in *The Autonomous Towns of Noricum and Pannonia – Die autonomen Städte in Noricum und Pannonien*, ed. Marjeta Šašel Kos and Peter Scherrer, vol. 2: *Pannonia II*, Situla 42 (Ljubljana: Narodni Muzej Slovenije, 2004), 155; Мирослав Јеремић, "Култне грађевне хришћанског Сирмијума," in *Sirmium – И на небу и на земљи: 1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика*, 2nd ed. (Sremska Mitrovica: Благо Сирмијума, 2014), 58-62; Miroslava Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History from the First Century AD to 582 AD* (Novi Sad and Sremska Mitrovica: Center for Historical Research, University of Novi Sad and Historical Archive Srem, 2017), 129-130 and 211-214 (with focus on inscriptions). Topographic plan in Duval, "Sirmium," 55; Miroslav Jeremić, "Adolf Hytrek et les premières fouilles archéologiques à Sirmium," *Starinar* 55 (2005): 127; Јеремић, "Култне грађевне," 53. See also Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 159; Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 51-52; Ivana Popović, "Survey of Early Christianity in Sirmium / Sremska Mitrovica (fourth to fifth c. AD)," in Bugarski et al., *Grenzübergänge*, 181-182.

²⁹ Duval, "Sirmium," 84, hesitated with regard to the number of naves due to the poor state of research and the advanced state of destruction of the basilica.

³⁰ Duval, "Sirmium," 83-4; Mirković, *Sirmium: istorija*, 117.

an inscription discovered in 1976. Carved on a marble slab, the inscription was retrieved from a double tomb located near the altar. It is preserved almost intact. The text is surrounded on the sides by leaves and palm branches, and on the bottom by a Christogram carved between a leaf and a palm branch. The motif of the Christogram enables us to date it to the second half of the fourth century.³¹ The inscription was dedicated by a certain Macedonius and his wife:

*In basilica domini n/ostri Erenei (!) ac mem/oriam posuit Maced/onius una cum m/atronam suam A / Ammete Evenati.*³²

The unusual names present on the inscription gave rise to various interpretations in secondary literature. The wife of Macedonius was identified either as *Ames of *Evenas; or, according to Kovács, *Mammes, daughter of *Zevenas. At any rate, these unusual names suggest that the wife's family came either from a Greek or a Syrian background.³³

Whether this inscription attests a case of *inhumatio ad martyres* or simply privileged burial³⁴ is open to question. Dolbeau doubted that the basilica had been planned as a *martyrium*. According to him, the *Passio Irenaei*'s uncharacteristic ending – with no word on the discovery of the martyr's body – points to the fact that, during the fourth and the fifth centuries, the Christian community of Sirmium could not account for Irenaeus' relics.³⁵ Therefore, without any relics to depose, building a *martyrium* in honor of Irenaeus seems unlikely.

During the Middle Ages, another cultic place dedicated to Irenaeus developed to the West from the ancient city walls, at Mačvanska Mitrovica, on the left bank of the river Sava. The site located a Christian cemetery, with a basilica at its core. In the period 1966-1970, archaeologists unearthed four layers of construction on the site of the basilica, the most recent going back to the thirteenth century. This last construction alone provides epigraphic attestation for the dedication to Irenaeus of

³¹ Published most recently in Miroslava Mirković, "Hrišćanske nekropole i hrišćanski natpisi u Sirmijumu," *Зборник Музеј Срема* 10 (2016): 82-83; Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 212 (transcription) and 307 (image).

³² My reading as per the image in Mirković, "Hrišćanske nekropole," 83. Various readings have been advanced in scholarship: *In basilica domini | nostri Erenei (!) ac mem/oriam posuit Maced/onius una cum m/atronam (!) suam (!) {A} | Ammete Evenati* (Mirković, "Hrišćanske nekropole," 82); *In basilica domini n/ostri Erenei (!) (h)a(n)c (?) mem/oriam posuit Maced/onius una cum m/atronam suam <M>/ammete (!) Zevenati (!) / (Christogram)* (Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 159); *In basilica domini n/ostri Erenei ad mem/oriam posuit Maced/onius una cum m/atronam suam a| Amates Eventi* (Милошевић, *Археологија*, 172).

³³ The wife's origin in the Syrian minority of Sirmium was suggested by Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 159, followed by Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 52.

³⁴ Jean-Pierre Sodini, "Les 'tombes privilégiées' dans l'Orient chrétien (à l'exception du diocèse d'Égypte)," in *L'Inhumation privilégiée du IV^e au VIII^e siècle en Occident: Actes du colloque tenu à Créteil les 16 – 18 mars 1984*, ed. Yvette Duval and Jean-Charles Picard (Paris: De Boccard, 1986), 233.

³⁵ Dolbeau, "Le dossier," 208.

Sirmium. The remains of the earliest layer consist of an apsis measuring at its opening 6.5 m, connected in ancient times to a basilica no longer visible today.³⁶

Vladislav Popović proposed two hypotheses related to this complex: Either the dedication to Irenaeus happened in the thirteenth century and for the latest monument only; or all the four layers were built on the site of Irenaeus' martyrdom.³⁷ The site is relatively close to where the western Roman bridge across the Sava once stood, on the road leading to Dalmatia.³⁸ From ancient and medieval sources we know that the bridge led to the late antique station *ad Basante*, the place where the river Bosna (ancient Bacuntius / Basuntius) flows into the Sava. This agrees with the information given by the *Passio Irenaei*, namely, that Irenaeus was executed on *pons Basentis* (i.e., leading to the station *ad Basante*).³⁹

However, in the absence of epigraphic confirmation that the earlier, late antique, structures were dedicated to Irenaeus, a late antique cult in Mačvanska Mitrovica remains a simple presumption. As Vuković showed, it is more likely that the presence of Irenaeus in Eastern calendars was the factor that prompted the establishment of the medieval cult in Mačvanska Mitrovica and not the other way around (an existing cult having led to the inclusion in the calendar).⁴⁰

Given the unlikelihood of a relic transfer from the eastern necropolis to Mačvanska Mitrovica, we are left with no information whatsoever on a translation (perhaps even existence?) of Irenaeus' relics. We may, thus, safely conclude with Dolbeau that even in Late Antiquity Irenaeus' cult had to cope with the absence of his relics.

1.4. Concluding Remarks on the Hagiographic Dossier

From the above we may surmise that a cult dedicated to Irenaeus flourished in the eastern cemetery of Sirmium during the second half of the fourth century. Although a martyrial basilica was dedicated here to his memory, there is – to date – no evidence of relics having been deposited therein. With the destruction of Sirmium during the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, the cult was most likely interrupted. It is possible, although uncertain, that the chapel built on the opposite bank of the Sava, in today's Mačvanska Mitrovica, served as a memorial of Irenaeus'

³⁶ Vladislav Popović, "Continuité culturelle et tradition littéraire dans l'église médiévale de Sirmium," in *Sirmium: Recherches archéologiques en Syrmie*, ed. Vladislav Popović, vol. XII (Belgrade: Institut Archéologique de Beograd, 1980), I-IV, with plan on p. II; Duval, "Sirmium," 84-85; Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 55; Милошевић, *Археологија*, 174.

³⁷ Popović, "Continuité," II-IV. See also Duval, "Sirmium," 85.

³⁸ See the topographic plans in Duval, "Sirmium," 55; and Mirković, *Sirmium: istorija*, 87. See also Mirković, "Sirmium," 153; and Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 62, both with further references to sources and secondary literature.

³⁹ Popović, "Continuité," III-IV.

⁴⁰ Vuković, "Martyrdom," 65-68. Cf. also Popović, "Survey," 182.

place of martyrdom. The cult resurfaces with certainty only during the eleventh century, probably under the influence of Irenaeus' presence in Eastern calendars.

The community of Sirmium celebrated the martyrdom of bishop Irenaeus on the 6th of April. A comparison of the list of Sirmian martyrs in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* with the prologue of the *Passio Pollionis* (I.2-4) confirms this date:

| | |
|--|--|
| ... Probus praeses imperatae sibi persecutionis a clericis sumpsit exordium; et comprehensum sanctum Montanum, presbyterum ecclesiae Singidunensis diuque christianae fidei uiribus conluctantem, misit in fluuium. Episcopum quoque Irenaeum Sirmiensi ecclesiae pro fide et commissae sibi plebis constantia fortiter dimicantem ad caelestem palmam simili sententia cognitor prouexit immitis. Etiam sanctum Demetrium, eiusdem ecclesiae diaconum, renuntiantem idolis et impia praecepta contemnentem, uario tormentorum genere confectum temporali morti tradidit ... | ad 26 mart.: Montanus ad 6 apr.: Irenaeus ad 9 apr.: Demetrius |
|--|--|

As Efthymios Rizos observed, the commemoration of Montanus, Irenaeus, and Demetrius in the *Hieronymianum* corresponds to the sequence in the prologue of the *Passio Pollionis*:⁴¹ Even if one opts for the 7th of April as Montanus' feast-day (thus disrupting the sequence in the *Passio Pollionis*), the succession of three feasts in such close proximity suggests that they were all celebrated in the framework of the same festival, a major event in the Sirmian calendar which lasted several days.⁴²

This comparison offers another clue to elucidate the problem of dates. Montanus' feast day appears in martyrological sources also on the 7th of April, immediately after Irenaeus on the 6th of April. If the two were perceived as a pair, then Montanus' other feast-day, the 26th of March, attracted also the displacement of Irenaeus' celebration one day earlier, as per the April sequence. Thus, Irenaeus was placed in later tradition on the 25th of March to showcase his association with Montanus on the 26th of March.

⁴¹ Rizos, "Martyrs," 196.

⁴² Rizos, "Martyrs," 196; Efthymios Rizos, "Record E01662," *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01662> (accessed on 02.03.2021).

2. PASSIO IRENAEI SIRMIENSIS

2.1. Extant Recensions and Their Relationship

As stated above, the *Passio Irenaei Sirmiensis* survived the ages in both Latin and Greek. If the Latin transmission is relatively homogeneous, the Greek version knows three redactions. In the following pages, I shall first offer a few remarks on the existing Latin editions, and then turn to the relationship between the Latin and the Greek recensions.

The Latin *Passio Irenaei* was first edited by the Bollandists in the third volume of the *Acta Sanctorum martii*.⁴³ The Bollandists retrieved the *passio* from the (now lost) Bödeken legendary, a late manuscript with many scribal interventions. Later, Thierry Ruinart collated several manuscripts of better quality in his critical edition: This became the *textus receptus* until François Dolbeau presented his state-of-the-art critical edition in 2011.⁴⁴

It is perhaps opportune to sum up the major differences between the Bollandist text and that established by Dolbeau. These touch rather on style than content. The copyist of the Bollandist version modified and added certain structures. He extended the replies of Irenaeus and presented as direct speech some passages which in the critical text of Dolbeau appear as narrative sections (meaning that in the Bollandist edition, these become words pronounced by Irenaeus, whereas in the edition of Dolbeau they are comments made by the *Passio*'s redactor). The following synoptic table presents the main differences:

| <i>Pass. Iren.</i> (ed. Bolland.) | <i>Pass. Iren.</i> (ed. Dolbeau) |
|---|--|
| 1. Eodem tempore erat in ciuitate Sirmiensem quidam Episcopus, Catholica fide et religione perfectus, nomine Irenaeus, qui multas pro Christi amore persecutiones perferens, digna confessione palmam victoriae promeruit. | 1.2. Quod et factum est circa famulum Dei Irenaeum episcopum urbis Sirmiensem, cuius iam nunc uobis certamen pandam uictoriamque ostendam, qui pro modestia sua ingenita et timore diuino cui operibus rectis inseruiebat, dignus nomine suo inuentus est. |
| 2. Aduenientes interea parentes eius cum viderent eum torqueri, amplectentes pedes eius precabantur, ut aetati suae parceret et praeceptis Imperatorum obediret. Hinc pater, inde uxor, inde pueri cum lacrymis se ingerebant (...) | 3.1. Aduenientes uero parentes eius uidentes eum torqueri precabantur eum. Hinc pueri pedes eius cum lacrymis amplectentes dicebant: " Miserere tui et nostri, pater. " Inde uxoris lugentis uultus aetatem eius praecabantur. |

⁴³ *Acta [S. Irenaei]* (ed. Henschenius and Papebrochius, 556-557).

⁴⁴ Ruinart, *Acta*, 432-434; Dolbeau, "Le dossier," 211-214.

Ille autem meliore cupiditate detentus, sententiam Domini ante oculos habebat dicens ad omnes: **"Haec sunt uerba Domini mei Iesu Christi: Si quis me negauerit coram hominibus, et ego negabo eum coram Patre meo qui in caelis est. Vnde sciatis, o amici carissimi, me nec blanditiis uestris nec Principum minis a praeceptis eius ullo modo posse deflecti: sed ad supernae uocationis spem omni intentione uelle festinare."**

(...)

3. [Probus] dixit: **"Iam nunc sufficiant tibi poenae, quibus afflicti es longo tempore. Accede ergo et sacrificia."**

Irenaeus respondit: **"Si quid facere cogitasti in me, fac celeriter et sine dilatione; sciens me in eadem confessione nominis Christi, in qua hactenus fui, etiam nunc et quamdiu vixero, perseuerare."**

(...)

S. Irenaeus respondit: **"Praeceptum Domini mei Iesu Christi adimpleui dicentis: Qui non abnegauerit parentes suos et renuntiauerit omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus: et, qui diligit patrem aut matrem aut uxorem aut filios aut fratres aut parentes super me, non est me dignus. Itaque qui Deum vere diligit, et ad eius promissionem perfecte intendit, omnia terrena despicit, nullumque parentem absque eo se habere profitetur."**

4. Probus dixit: **"Consule tibi et parentibus tuis, immolans diis et praeceptis Imperatorum obtemperans, ut non te diuersis cruciatibus interficiam."** S. Irenaeus respondit: **"Iam dixi tibi, ut facias de me quid uelis, sciens quod diis tuis numquam sacrificabo. Iam nunc uidebis, quantam mihi Dominus Iesus Christus dabit tolerantiam aduersus tuas insidias et diabolicas, quas Sanctis praeparasti, poenas."**

3.3. Sed, ut dictum est, meliore cupiditate detentus, sententiam Domini ante oculos habens quae dicit:

Si quis me negauerit coram hominibus, et ego negabo eum coram Patre meo qui in caelis est, omnes ergo despiciens nulli omnino respondit.

Festinabat autem ad supernae spem uocationis peruenire.

4.2. Et Probus dixit ad eum:

"Iam sacrificia, Irenaeae, lucrans poenas."
Irenaeus respondit: **"Fac, quod iussum est. Hoc a me ne expectes."**

4.6. Irenaeus respondit: **"Praeceptum est Domini mei Iesu Christi dicentis:**

Qui diligit patrem aut matrem aut uxorem aut filios aut fratres aut parentes super me, non est me dignus."

7. Atque ad Deum in caelis aspiciens et ad eius promissiones intendens omniaque despiciens nullum absque eum se nosse atque habere fatebatur.

4.9. Probus dixit: **"Consule tibi, iuuenis. Immola ut non te uariis cruciatibus impendam."**

Irenaeus respondit: **"Fac, quod uis."**

Iam nunc uidebis quantam mihi Dominus Iesus Christus dabit tolerantiam aduersus tuas insidias."

The relationship between the Latin and the Greek recensions is rather complicated to establish. Manlio Simonetti, the first to systematically compare the two versions, dealt extensively with the topic.⁴⁵ However, he based his comparison exclusively on BHG 948, likewise edited by the Bollandists in the *Acta Sanctorum*.⁴⁶

Simonetti noted that this Greek recension abounds in narrative sections compared to the preference for dialogue in the Latin one. Notable differences in this respect occur in the introduction, the first interview before the governor, and three smaller episodes belonging (in the Latin version) to the second interview. BHG 948 presents the first interview (ch. 2 in the Latin recension)⁴⁷ as part of an elaborate introduction with two roles: It summarises in exhortative form the message of the *passio* and it provides chronological indications. The Greek redactor eliminated altogether Irenaeus' first hearing before Probus, and the first set of tortures. Moreover, he presented the supplication of Irenaeus' relatives (ch. 3) as a private event, not as happening in court. This bears consequences on another episode involving Irenaeus' family: In section 4.6 of the Latin recension, the persecutor asks Irenaeus about his family, who was present at the first hearing. The Greek recension eliminated both the question and Irenaeus' reply. The second court interview in the Latin text also has as counterpart in BHG 948 an indirect speech that summarises in one sentence the events of sections 4.1-2. The dialogue begins with Irenaeus' reply. Finally, the redactor of BGH 948 rendered Irenaeus' final prayer more concisely. Compare:

Pass. Iren. (ed. Dolbeau)

1. Cum esset persecutio sub Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus, quando diuersis agonibus concertantes Christiani, a tyrannis inlata supplicia deuota Deo mente suscipientes, praemiis se perpetuis participes efficiebant.

2. Quod et factum est circa famulum Dei Irenaeum episcopum urbis Sirmiensem, cuius iam nunc uobis certamen pandam uictoriamque ostendam, qui pro modestia sua ingenita et timore diuino cui operibus rectis inseruiebat, dignus nomine suo inuentus est.

Μαρτ. Εἰρην. (ed. Bolland.)

1. Οτ' ἂν τρόποις ἀγαθοῖς εὐσεβῆς, συνασκηθῇ, τῶν κρειττόνων ἐφιέμενος, καὶ φόβον Θεοῦ προσλάβηται τότε πάντων ἀθρόως τῶν ἐν τῷ δὲ τῷ βίῳ καταφρονήσας, πρὸς τῶν ἐπηγγελεμένων ἀγαθῶν τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν ἀπείγεται καὶ ἅπερ διὰ τῆς ἀκοῆς παρόντα, πίστει βεβαίᾳ θεώμενος, ἐπεθύμησεν, ταῦτα θάπτον δι' αὐτῆς τῆς αὐθοψίας ἀπολαβὼν ἔχειν, δοξάζει τὸν Κύριον.
Ὁ δὲ γέγονε καὶ περὶ τὸν μακάριον Ἐπίσκοπον Εἰρηναῖον τῆς τοῦ Σιρμίου πόλεως. Οὗτος γὰρ δι' ἐπιείκειαν ὑπερβάλλουσιν καὶ τὴν περὶ τοῦ θείου εὐλάβειαν, τοῖς ἔργοις κυρῶν τὴν προσηγορίαν, καὶ νέος τῆς προεδρίας ἀξιωθείς, καταλαβόντος αὐτὸν τοῦ διωγμοῦ, τοῦ γενομένου ἐπὶ Διοκλητιανῷ

⁴⁵ Simonetti, *Studi*, 55-65.

⁴⁶ *Μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Εἰρηναίου* (ed. Henschenius and Papebrochius, Appendix, p. 23).

⁴⁷ According to Dolbeau's distribution in chapters and sections.

καὶ Μαξιμιανοῦ καὶ Κωνσταντίου τῶν
Βασιλέων, ἀκάμπτω καὶ ἀνενδότῳ
προθυμία χρώμενος, καὶ τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν
ἐπικτεινόμενος, ἔσπευδεν ἐπὶ τὸ βραβεῖον
τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως.

2. Comprehensus itaque oblatus est Probo
praesidi Pannoniae. Probus praeses dixit
ad eum: "Obtemperans praeceptis diuinis
sacrifica diis." Irenaeus respondit: "*Qui diis
et non Deo sacrificat eradicabitur.*" 2.
Probus praeses dixit: "Clementissimi
principes iusserunt aut sacrificare aut
tormentis succumbere debere." Irenaeus
respondit: "Mihi enim praeceptum est
tormenta magis suscipere quam Deum
denegans daemoniis sacrificare." 3. Probus
praeses dixit: "Aut sacrifica aut faciam te
torqueri." Irenaeus respondit: "Gaudeo si
feceris ut Domini mei passionibus
particeps inueniar." 4. Probus praeses
iussit eum uexari. Cumque acerrime
uexaretur, dixit ad eum: "Quid dicis,
Irenae? Sacrifica." Irenaeus respondit:
"Sacrifico per bonam confessionem Deo
meo cui semper sacrificauī."

3. Aduenientes uero parentes eius uidentes
eum torqueri precabantur eum. Hinc pueri
pedes eius cum lacrymis amplectentes
dicebant: "Miserere tui et nostri, pater."
Inde uxoris lugentis uultus aetatem eius
praecabantur. 2. Parentum uero omnium
luctus et fletus erat super eum,
domesticorum gemitus, uicinorum ululatus
et lamentatio amicorum, qui omnes
clamantes ad eum dicebant: "Tenerae
adulescentiae tuae miserere."

3. Sed, ut dictum est, meliore cupiditate
detentus,
sententiam Domini ante oculos habens
quae dicit:

*Si quis me negauerit coram hominibus, et
ego negabo eum coram Patre meo qui in
caelis est, omnes ergo despiciens nulli
omnino respondit. Festinabat autem ad
supernae spem uocationis peruenire.*

4. Probus praeses dixit: "Quid dicis,
Irenae? Flectere horum lacrymis ab

2. Οὐκ ἔλυσαν γοῦν αὐτοῦ τὴν στερότητα
ὑβρεις, ποικίλα πάθη σημαίνουσαι, οὐ
ποταμοὶ ἀπειλούμενοι, οὐ κρηνοὶ καὶ
βασάνων εἶδη διάφορα, οὐ τότε πάντων
ἀλγεινότερον τέκνα μετὰ συγγενῶν καὶ
φίλων ὀλοφύρουμένα, οἷς εἰώθασιν
καταμαλάττεσθαι πατέρες ὀλιγόψυχοι.
Ὅτ' ἂν γὰρ παῖδες τοῖς ποσὶ μετὰ
δακρῶν περεπλέκοντο [καὶ πρὸς τὸν
Ἅγιον ἐπολέμουν] γυναικὸς
ὀλοφυρομένης ὅψις κατηφῆς, γονέων
πένθος ἐφ' ὃν τὴν ἡλικίαν ἀκμάζοντι,
οἰκείων στεναγμοῦ καὶ φίλων θρήνος καὶ
γνώρημων [ἔνστασις] ἔτι νεάζουσιν
ἀκμήν μετὰ δεήσεως οἰκτεῖται
προτρεπομένων·

τούτοις πᾶσιν, οἷς εἶπεν, οὐκ ἐκάμπτετο,
ἀλλὰ καθάπερ εἶπομεν, τῷ τῶν
κρειττόνων ἔρωτι κατεχόμενος καὶ τὸν
φοβὸν τῆς κρίσεως πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχων,
δεδοικῶς δὲ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ Κυρίου τὴν
λέγουσαν, *Εάν τις ἀρνησεται με ἔμπροσθεν
τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι καγὰ αὐτὸν
ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Πατρὸς μου ἐν τοῖς
οὐρανοῖς, πάντων ὑπερφροντήσας τῶν
χαλεπωτέρων, ἔσπευδεν ἐπὶ τὴν
προκειμένην ἐλπίδα.*

3. Προσαχθεὶς οὖν τῷ τηνικαῦτα τῆς
Παννονίας Ἡγεμόνι Πρόβῳ, καὶ

insania tua et consulens adulescentiae tuae sacrificia." Irenaeus respondit: "Consulo mihi in perpetuo si non sacrificauero." 5. Probus autem iussit eum recipi in custodia carceris. Plurimis uero diebus ibidem clausus poenis est affectus.

4. Quodam autem tempore media nocte procedente et sedente pro tribunali praeside Probo, introductus est iterum beatissimus martyr Irenaeus. 2. Et Probus dixit ad eum: "Iam sacrificas, Irenaeae, lucrans poenas." Irenaeus respondit: "Fac, quod iussum est. Hoc a me ne expectes." 3. Probus iterum uexatum eum fustibus caedi praecepit. Irenaeus respondit: "Deum habeo quem a prima aetate colere didici, ipsum adoro qui me confortat in omnibus, cui etiam et sacrifico. Deos uero manu factos adorare non possum."

(...)

6. Probus dixit: "Et qui fuerunt illi qui praeterita flebant sessione?" Irenaeus respondit: "Praeceptum est Domini mei Iesu Christi dicentis: *Qui diligit patrem aut matrem aut uxorem aut filios aut fratres aut parentes super me, non est me dignus.*" 7. Atque ad Deum in caelis aspiciens et ad eius promissiones intendens omniaque despiciens nullum absque eum se nosse atque habere fatebatur.

(...)

5.3. Et cum uenisset ad pontem qui uocatur Basentis, expolians se uestimenta sua et extendens manus in caelum orauit dicens: 4. "Domine Iesu Christe, qui pro mundi salute pati dignatus es, pateant caeli tui et suscipiant angeli spiritum serui tui Irenaei, qui propter nomen tuum et plebem tuam productus de ecclesia tua catholica haec patior.

5. Te peto tuamque deprecor misericordiam ut et me suscipere et hos in fide tua confirmare digneris."

6. Sic itaque percussus gladio, a ministris proiectus est in fluuium Sauii.

ἐπερωτηθεῖς, εἰ βούλοιο θῦσαι, ἀπεκρίνατο ὁ μακάριος Εἰρηναῖος· Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ζῆν μεθ' ὑμῶν αἰροῦμαι. Τότε ἀνελήφθη εἰς τὸ δεσμοτήριον.

Ἐκ πλειόνων δὲ ἡμερῶν ἐν τῇ τῆς εἵρκης φρουρᾷ παραδοθεὶς, μέσης νυκτὸς προκαθίσαντος τοῦ Ἡγεμόνος προσήχθη πάλιν ὁ μακάριος Εἰρηναῖος, καὶ ποικίλας βασάνους ὑπομείνας καὶ ἐρωτώμενος διατὶ οὐκ ἐπιθύει,

ἀπεκρίθη, Ὅτι Θεὸν ἔχω, ὃν ἐκ παιδὸς ἡλικίας σέβειν δεδίδαγμαι, καὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις ὑφ' ὑμῶν θεοῖς προσκυνεῖν οὐ δύναμαι.

Ταῦτα δὲ ἔλεγεν ὁ μακάριος Εἰρηναῖος, τὴν τοῦ Κυρίου ἐντολὴν ἑναυλον ἔχων τὴν λέγουσαν, Ὁ πατρὶς πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπὲρ ἐμὲ, ἢ ἀδελφούς, ἢ γυναῖκα, ἢ τέκνα, οὐκ ἔστι μου ἄξιος· πρὸς ὃν ἀτενίζων ὁ Μακάριος, ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ὅλως ἦν τῷ φρονήματι διαιτώμενος, καὶ ἅπασαν τὸν ἀνθρωπίνην διάθεσιν καταλιπών, οὐδένα πλέον τοῦ Κυρίου εἰδέναι καὶ ἔχειν ὠμολόγει.

(...)

5. (...) Καὶ μετὰ τὸ παραγενέσθαι εἰς τὴν γέφυραν, ἣτις καλεῖται Ἀρτεμις, ἀποδηθεὶς τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ ἀνατείνας εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν τὰς χεῖρας, ἤρξατο οὕτως εἰπών· Κύριε, ἀνοιχθήτωσαν οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ ὑποδεξάσθωσαν τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ δούλου σου· ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ σου καὶ τῆς καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας καὶ παντὸς τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτῆς σοὶ πιστεύων, Κύριε, ταῦτα πάσχω.

Καὶ πληγεὶς τῷ ξίφει ἐπέμφθη εἰς τὸν Σαὸν ποταμόν.

Analysing these differences based on literary criteria and considerations of historical reliability, Simonetti proposed that the extant Latin version was in fact a

translation produced from a Greek original (not BHG 948). He observed that the Latin recension suppressed Constantius from the list of ruling emperors, but the Greek does include Constantius, and, he reasoned, the original *passio* must have included him, too. Constantius was subsequently eliminated from the Latin *passio* because of his Western reputation as an emperor supporting Christians.⁴⁸

Simonetti gave, in general, more credit to the extant Greek text, arguing that the Latin converted the narrative passages into stylistically overburdening, and quite unnecessary, dialogical episodes.⁴⁹ The presence in the Latin version of a number of Grecisms;⁵⁰ and the observation that passages without correspondent in the Greek recension (i.e., the ‘innovations’ of the Latin redactor) consist mostly of hagiographic commonplaces, often with Scriptural connotations, lent further substance to this claim.⁵¹ However, both these argumentative threads have been criticised in subsequent scholarship.

In his review of *Studi agiografici*, the Bollandist Baudouin de Gaiffier accused Simonetti of having pushed literary comparativism to the extreme.⁵² He noted that a mere comparison between the Latin and the Greek recensions could not clarify their relationship, since Simonetti posited a lost original. What that original looked like, when and how the extant recensions were derived from it remains a mystery. Moreover, that a hagiographic text is constructed from commonplaces is no guarantee for it being a second hand redaction. As De Gaiffier observed, the hagiographic universe of expression represented a specific set of categories that late antique Christians used in their reflections on the saints.⁵³ It is no surprise then that early Christian hagiographers drew from this pool of structures, *topoi*, narrative and panegyric strategies when writing their martyr-stories.⁵⁴

The narrative homogeneity of the Greek recension, which Simonetti considered another argument for its chronological precedence, can also function as a counter-argument. It is entirely possible that BHG 948 modified deliberately its model, harmonising the style and condensing the narrative to bring cohesion to an otherwise loosely structured original. As for the use of Grecisms in 4.11 (“praeceptis regalibus,” a calque of the Greek τῇ βασιλικῇ κελεύσει in ch. 4 of BHG 948), and 5.1 (“iratus ... super fiduciam,” according to Simonetti, a *hapax legomenon* translating literally ὀργισθεὶς (...) ἐπὶ τῇ παρόρησίᾳ in ch. 5 of BHG 948),⁵⁵ Dolbeau showed this Greek

⁴⁸ Simonetti, *Studi*, 60.

⁴⁹ Simonetti, *Studi*, 67, on the Latin redactor: “cercando di rappresentare in forma dialogica ciò che nella sua fonte era riportato in forma narrativa (...), è caduto nell’incongruenza di moltiplicare a sproposito le risposte di Ireneo.”

⁵⁰ Simonetti, *Studi*, 59-60.

⁵¹ Simonetti, *Studi*, 61-65.

⁵² De Gaiffier, review of *Studi agiografici*, 425.

⁵³ De Gaiffier, review of *Studi agiografici*, 425.

⁵⁴ Even reliable hagiographic texts demonstrably derived from authentic court records employ this narrative repertoire.

⁵⁵ Simonetti, *Studi*, 60.

influence to rise from the context in which the *Passio Irenaei* had been written, rather than being the result of translation.⁵⁶ Pannonia, he argued, was a bilingual province, and thus one can expect that one language influence the other, as in the case of *regalis*. The semantic family of “regnare” seems omnipresent in Pannonian hagiography written in Latin,⁵⁷ including texts unknown in the Greek East. “Iratus super fiduciam” might be a *hapax*, but it can be explained with the tendency, characteristic to late antique Latin, to replace the preposition “de” with “super.”⁵⁸ Dolbeau refrained eventually from adopting a position on the issue, considering that the two texts essentially transmit the same content – thus, the question of the *Passio*’s original language is a minor one.⁵⁹

Since then, however, new information has been published on the relationship between the Greek recensions of Irenaeus’ hagiography. Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić and Ifigenija Draganić showed that BHG 948, previously thought the oldest version, was in fact a shortened text dependent on BHG 949. Their comparative study helped elucidate some of the shortcomings of BHG 948.⁶⁰ Smirnov-Brkić and Draganić were also inclined to favour a Greek original, or at least a Greek editor of the *Passio Irenaei*: Among their arguments feature the interpretation of the name Irenaeus as “peaceful, serene” in *Pass. Iren.* 1.2 (“dignus nomine suo inuentus est”); and the use of “martyrizare” in *Pass. Iren.* 6.1 (“Martyrizauit famulus Dei sanctus Irenaeus”).⁶¹ Yet these passages can at best attest that the *Passio Irenaei* was originally compiled by a person familiar with the Greek language: This person, however, need not be a Greek writer. Besides BHL 4466, “martyrizare” appears in another hagiography stemming from Sirmium, the *Passio Sereni*, which has no known Greek connection.⁶²

Ultimately, only when a critical edition of all Greek recensions is published can the relationship between the Latin and the Greek, as well as the question of original language be elucidated. For the time being, one can only assume that this vocabulary with Greek connotations is simply the product of mutual linguistic influence in a bilingual region. Thus, the original *passio* would have been redacted in Latin. This is also the assumption of recent scholarship.⁶³ In particular, Rizos states that the close relationship with the *Passio Pollionis* (to which I shortly turn) suggests that the original must have been in Latin. He advances two hypotheses for the date of the Greek translation: Either during the Byzantine reconquest of Sirmium in the sixth

⁵⁶ Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 206-207.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., *Pass. Poll.* 1.1: “Diocletianus et Maximianus regnantes;” *Pass. Quir.* 1.1: “suscitatis regum amicis;” *Pass. Quir.* VI.5: “regalium praeceptorum.” Cf. Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 206.

⁵⁸ Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 206n11 quotes as a parallel case *Pass. Iren.* 3.2: “luctus et fletus erat super eum.”

⁵⁹ Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 207.

⁶⁰ Smirnov-Brkić and Draganić, “Latin and Greek Recensions,” 31-39.

⁶¹ Smirnov-Brkić and Draganić, “Latin and Greek Recensions,” 37 and 40, respectively.

⁶² *Pass. Sereni* 5.2: “Martyrizatus est autem sanctus Senerus...”

⁶³ Reinhart Herzog and Peter Lebrecht Schmidt, eds., *Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike*, vol. 5: *Restauration und Erneuerung: Die lateinische Literatur von 284 bis 374 n. Chr.*, HAW 8/5 (München: C.H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989), 529; Bratož, “Verzeichnis,” 216, with n52; Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 62; Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 38n71.

century; or during the seventh – ninth centuries, as part of a massive endeavour to translate Latin hagiography into Greek.⁶⁴ Both are possible. If the translation was made during the Byzantine reoccupation, this might have helped spread the cult of Irenaeus in the East.⁶⁵ The association with Irenaeus of Lyon in Byzantine tradition, on the other hand, supports the later option.⁶⁶

2.2. Relationship with the *Passio Pollionis*; When and Where Was the *Passio Irenaei* composed?

There are several layers of connection between the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*:⁶⁷ As stated above, the *Passio Pollionis* mentions Irenaeus by name and the motivations of his martyrdom echo those of the *Passio Irenaei*. Both texts share the name of the magistrate commissioned to carry out the persecution (the governor Probus), and both quote Ex. 22:20. Compare also:

Pass. Iren. (ed. Dolbeau)

2.1. Irenaeus respondit: “**Qui diis et non Deo sacrificat eradicabitur.** 2. (...) Mihi enim praeceptum est tormenta magis suscipere quam Deum denegans **daemoniis sacrificare.**”

(...)

4.8. Irenaeus respondit: “Filii mei Deum habent quem et ego, qui potens est illos saluare. **Tu autem fac quod tibi praeceptum est.**”

(...)

12. Irenaeus respondit: “Multifarias minas tuas et tormenta plurima expectabam (...). Tu autem nihil horum intulisti. Vnde hoc facias oro ut cognoscas quemadmodum **Christiani propter fidem quae est in Deo mortem contemnere consueverunt.**”

(...)

5.4. “Domine Iesu Christe (...) suscipiant angeli spiritum servi tui Irenaei, **qui propter nomen tuum et plebem tuam productus de ecclesia tua catholica haec patior.** 5. Te peto tuamque deprecor misericordiam ut et me suscipere et hos in fide tua confirmare digneris.”

Pass. Poll. (ed. Tamas)

IV.3. Beatus Pullio respondit: “Ego hoc non sum facturus, quia scriptum est: **Qui sacrificat demoniis et non Deo, eradicabitur.**”

IV.4. Beatus Pullio respondit: “**Fac quod tibi praeceptum est.**”

III.11. [Pullio respondit:] “(...) in perpetuum esse uicturum **qui pro fide Christi momentaneam mortem quam uos potestis inferre contempserit.**”

I.3. Episcopum quoque Irenaeum Sirmiensi ecclesiae **pro fide et commissae sibi plebis constantia fortiter dimicantem** ad caelestem palmam simili sententia cognitor prouexit immitis.

⁶⁴ Rizos, “Martyrs,” 197-198.

⁶⁵ As argued in Efthymios Rizos, “Record E01663,” *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://cs.la.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01663> (accessed 03.03.2021).

⁶⁶ Rizos, “Martyrs,” 198.

⁶⁷ I briefly discussed this issue in my edition of the *Passio Pollionis*. See Tamas, “*Passio Pollionis*,” 16-18.

Levente Nagy argued that the references to Irenaeus in the *Passio Pollionis* could have been simply taken from oral tradition, and not from the *Passio Irenaei* itself.⁶⁸ Thus, he more or less denied a textual relationship between the two narratives. The other parallels listed above cannot prove a direct textual dependence either. Ex 22:20, the phrase “Fac, quod tibi praeceptum est”, or the *topos* of the martyr’s despal of death in the hope of eternal rewards are, indeed, recurrent in hagiographic literature.⁶⁹ In this context, one must look to other factors to answer the question whether there is a direct dependence of one text on the other or the similarities are rather characteristic forms of expression.

The *Passio Pollionis* strictly follows the style of court protocol, without scenes of torture, attempts at bribery, etc., and without redactorial interventions. The *Passio Irenaei*, instead, contains a larger number of hagiographic tropes: torture scenes, multiple hearings, attempts to make the martyr recant by appealing to his family, the martyr’s final prayer.⁷⁰ If the style of the *Passio Pollionis* is more classicising, the Latin of the *Passio Irenaei* is closer to the late antique colloquial style. But is this enough to suppose two distinct writing processes influenced by stereotypes *en vogue* in the compositional milieu of the two *passiones*?

Structurally and content-wise, *Pass. Poll.* I.3 summarises Irenaeus’ final prayer in BHL 4466. Thus, it alludes to more than just information transmitted via oral tradition. Judging by this summarizing character, one would be inclined to believe that the *Passio Irenaei* did serve as a source of inspiration for the *Passio Pollionis*.

In this light, we can offer a new interpretation of the phrase “Ego hoc non sum factur, quia scriptum est: *Qui sacrificat demoniis et non Deo, eradicabitur.*” (*Pass. Poll.* IV.4). It can be seen as a synthesised takeover of two scriptural passages cited in *Pass. Iren.* 2.1-2: “*Qui diis et non Deo sacrificat eradicabitur.* (...) Mihi enim praeceptum est tormenta magis suscipere quam Deum denegans demoniis sacrificare.” The two scriptural places quoted here are Ex 22:20, *Qui diis et non Deo sacrificat eradicabitur*, and Dt 32:17, *Sacrificauerunt demoniis et non Deo*. Their association goes back to Cyprian’s *Ep. ad Fortunatum*. Henrik Hildebrandt considered that the redactor of the *Passio Irenaei* took it from Cyprian’s letter.⁷¹ If so, the redactor of the *Passio Pollionis* took the association a step further. He blended “demoniis” of Dt 32:17 into the quotation of Ex 22:20. The replacement of “diis” with “demoniis” fits well into the apologetic tenure of Pollio’s interview with the *praeses*.

Granted, this is not the only text to contain this peculiar combination. It also appears in the *Passio Petri Balsami* 1, a parallel that was already pointed out by

⁶⁸ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 48.

⁶⁹ For Ex 22:20, see, e.g.: *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526), in combination with “Fac, quod tibi iussum est,” *Pass. Phileae* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 344.13-14). For “Fac, quod tibi praeceptum est,” see, e.g.: *Acta Cypriani* 3.5 (ed. Musurillo, 172.12-13), *Ep. Phileae* 9 (ed. Musurillo, 322.34-36).

⁷⁰ None of these elements are present in the *Passio Pollionis*.

⁷¹ Hildebrandt, “Early Christianity,” 60n6.

Simonetti.⁷² However, the *Passio Petri Balsami* is also a hagiographic patchwork, with motifs and even phrases that can be considered borrowings from both the *Passio Pollionis* and the *Passio Irenaei*.⁷³

In line with the argument above, I suggest that the *Passio Irenaei* was most likely written before or around the same time as the *Passio Pollionis*. The similarities denote a common compositional environment. We might even venture the hypothesis that the two *passiones* originate from a Sirmian workshop, although no certain proof exists in this sense.

As to the date when the *Passio Irenaei* was composed, we must again rely on the text itself, the connections with the *Passio Pollionis*, and indications relative to the late antique cult in Sirmium. The hagiographic style and content of the *Passio Irenaei* suggests it was composed at a relatively late date – but before stereotypes took hold entirely of the late antique hagiographic universe, given the few non-conventional elements from a hagiographic point of view: Irenaeus' youth in spite of his episcopal vocation; the dissuasive attempts of family and friends; and the silence on the recovery of Irenaeus' body after his martyrdom. Dolbeau examined these briefly, concluding that they do not respect the trends of late hagiographic compositions.⁷⁴

These observations confirm the *terminus ante quem* that we can infer on the basis of the *Passio Pollionis*. The latter can be dated to the last two decades of the fourth century,⁷⁵ a period in which both Pollio's cult in Cibalae and Irenaeus' cult at Sirmium thrived. Supposing that the *Passio Irenaei* had been composed to serve the local cult of Irenaeus, and that it predates (or at least co-dates) the *Passio Pollionis*, its *terminus ante quem* can be set to before the close of the fourth century, confirming scholarly opinions advanced thus far.⁷⁶

⁷² *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526): "Petrus respondit: Et hoc veri perpetuique Regis est praeceptum: *Si quis sacrificaverit daemioniis, et non soli DEO, eradicabitur.*"

⁷³ The borrowed blocks can be easily distinguished. Compare: *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1: "[Petrus] oblatus est Severo Praesidi. Severus dixit ad eum: **Quis diceris? (...) Quod officium geris?** (...)," and *Pass. Poll.* III.1-2: "Probus praeses dixit: **Quis diceris? (...) Quod officium geris?**"; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1: "Praeses dixit: **Parentes habes?** Petrus respondit: **Non habeo.** Praeses dixit: Mentiris, audiui enim te habere parentes. Petrus respondit: **In Evangelio mihi praeceptum est omnia denegare,** cum ad nominis Christiani venero confessionem," and *Pass. Iren.* 2.5-7: "Probus dixit: **Parentes habes?** Irenaeus respondit: **Non habeo.** Probus dixit: Et qui fuerunt illi qui praeterita flebant sessione? Irenaeus respondit: **Praeceptum est Domini mei Iesu Christi dicentis: Qui diligit patrem aut matrem aut uxorem aut filios aut fratres aut parentes super me, non est me dignus;**" *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1: "Praeses dixit: **Praeceptum est a clementissimis Principibus,** ut omnes Christiani **aut sacrificent, aut diversis poenis moriantur,**" and *Pass. Iren.* 2.2: "Probus praeses dixit: **Clementissimi principes iusserunt aut sacrificare aut tormentis succumbere debere;**" *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1: "Praeses dixit: Audi me; misereere tui, et sacrifica. Petrus respondit: Tunc mei misereor, **si non sacrificavero, et a veritate non discessero,**" and *Pass. Iren.* 3.4: "Probus praeses dixit: Quid dicis, Irenae? Flectere horum lacrymis ab insania tua et consulens adolescentiae tuae sacrificia. Irenaeus respondit: **Consulo mihi in perpetuo si non sacrificavero.**"

⁷⁴ Dolbeau, "Le dossier," 207-208, with n. 17.

⁷⁵ See chapter III.2.1. below.

⁷⁶ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 81; Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 216 (albeit with some doubts); Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 62; Nagy, *Pannoniai városok*, 48. Hildebrandt, "Early Christianity," 59, considers that it belongs to the context of the fourth century Sirmian Church; Jarak, "Martyres," 272, also dates it to the

The *terminus post quem* is more difficult to approximate. It depends, partly, on the hagiographic style (second half of the fourth century), but more importantly, on identifying the historical model of the persecutor from both the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*.

I have argued elsewhere that the character of the governor Probus, a recurrent figure in Pannonia-related hagiography, is a literary creation rather than a historical person.⁷⁷ Apart from the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*, Probus also appears in the *Passio Anastasiae*.⁷⁸ Titled variously as “praeses,” ἡγεμῶν, and “praefectus Illyrici” – or simply “praefectus” in one branch of the *Passio Pollionis* and the *Passio Irenaei* each,⁷⁹ he seems to have ruled in the region of Pannonia Secunda,⁸⁰ but sources ambiguously attribute his jurisdiction over the entire Pannonia.⁸¹ This contrasts with another piece of information we can retrieve from the *Passio Pollionis*: The hagiographer placed Probus’ residence at Sirmium, meaning he must have had in mind the reorganised Pannonias after the administrative reforms of Diocletian, since only then did Sirmium become a provincial capital.⁸²

If Probus is the creation of late antique hagiographers, one ought to look for historical namesakes who could have provided the model for this character. A first person proposed in scholarship is the emperor Marcus Aurelius Probus (276-282 AD).⁸³ A Pannonian native, he ended up being murdered by his own soldiers near

fourth century. In turn, Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 207n17, postponed the *terminus post quem* until the fifth century.

⁷⁷ Hajnalka Tamas, “Valentinian I, *christianissimus imperator*? Notes on a Passage of the *Passio Pollionis* (BHL 6869),” *VigChr* 68, no. 1 (2014): 82-97. The editors of *PLRE*’s first volume are reserved with regard to the reliability of these hagiographic texts as historical sources: *PLRE* 1:736, s.v. “Probus 2” (*praeses* of Pannonia Inferior for 303/305 AD, based on “sources of doubtful reliability”). Cf. also Herbert Musurillo, introduction to *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), XLIII. These precautions did not keep Jenő Fitz from beginning his *fasti praesidum Pannoniae Secundae* with the Probus of Pannonian hagiography (note that Fitz believes at least the *Passio Irenaei* to be reliable, and, consequently, establishes the Diocletianic reorganization of the Pannonian provinces as early as ca. 296 AD). See Fitz, *L’administration*, 49 and 93 (with commentary on the years of office forwarded by *PLRE*, vol. 1). Cf. also Jenő Fitz, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens in der Römerzeit*, vol. 3 (Budapest: Encyclopedia, 1994), 1253; Bratož, “Die diokletianische Christenverfolgung,” 134 (only for 304).

⁷⁸ Bratož, “Die diokletianische Christenverfolgung,” 134.

⁷⁹ See the critical apparatus at *Pass. Poll.* III.2 (ed. Tamas, 28.29). The Bollandist edition of the *Passio Irenaei*, based on a fifteenth century manuscript, reads in the concluding paragraph: “agente Praefecturam Probo Praeside,” *Pass. Iren.* 5 (ed. Henschenius and Papebrochius, 557).

⁸⁰ The list in *Pass. Poll.* I.2-4 includes a presbyter from Singidunum (strictly speaking not belonging to the province of Pannonia), the bishop and deacon of Sirmium, as well as a lector in Cibalae.

⁸¹ The extended attributions of Probus over the entire Pannonia, without any regard for the existing administrative divisions, were already noted by Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 211n45.

⁸² In the course of these reforms, Pannonia Superior and Inferior were further split to create four units: Pannonia Prima, Savia, Valeria, and Secunda. Whereas the capital of Pannonia Inferior had been at Aquincum, the new Pannonia Secunda had as capital Sirmium. Fitz, *L’administration*, 14-15 and Mócsy, *Pannonia*, 273 rightly note that the hagiographers referred to a period when this administrative division had already taken place. However, they used this evidence to argue an early date for the Diocletianic reorganisation (296 AD), instead of considering it a reflection of the administrative situation from the compositional milieu of the Pannonian *passiones*.

⁸³ *PLRE*, 1:736, s.v. “Probus 3.” This was first suspected by Timothy D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 189. Bratož, “Die

Sirmium.⁸⁴ Albeit of ill repute among Pannonian provincials of his time, it is doubtful that this negative image was sufficiently impressed in Pannonian collective memory as to offer such a powerful incentive to hagiographers writing almost one century later.

Another possible model is Pompeius Probus, member of Galerius' entourage and *praefectus praetorio Orientis* in 310-314 AD.⁸⁵ However, the governorship of Pannonia does not feature among the titles of Pompeius Probus,⁸⁶ of whose affairs in Pannonia and with Pannonian provincials we know little. As far as is known, he never took residence at Sirmium in official capacity, whereas the person we are seeking for must have had a strong local history.

Such a person is readily revealed if the quest turns from the early fourth century to the compositional context of the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis*. Since the *Passio Pollionis* mentions Valentinian I by name, it is opportune to scout the administration of the Valentinian dynasty in Pannonia and/or Illyricum. And thus we arrive at Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus, one of the most powerful aristocrats in the 360s and 370s, who held the prefecture of Illyricum throughout much of the later fourth century: He was, in fact, pretorian prefect of Illyricum in 364 AD and 366 AD; praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Italy and Africa in 368-375 AD and 383 AD.⁸⁷

Member of the Christianizing *gens Anicia*, Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus has divided the opinion of his contemporaries, but also the opinion of modern scholars, as to his administrative achievements.⁸⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus left a scathing review of

diokletianische Christenverfolgung," 134n71, mentions Barnes' hypothesis, albeit expressing doubts. Two notes further (134n73), he comments that the persecutor of the *Passio Anastasiae*, this time a *praefectus Illyrici* Probus, recalls the figure of Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus. My observations below concentrate on this latter possibility.

⁸⁴ PLRE, 1:736, s.v. "Probus 3," with further references.

⁸⁵ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 40-41.

⁸⁶ A fact acknowledged also by Nagy. See PLRE, 1:740, s.v. "Probus 6."

⁸⁷ PLRE, 1:736-740, s.v. "Probus 5." For a detailed analysis of the evidence on Probus' four mandates as prefect and their respective date, see David M. Novak, "Anicianae domus culmen, nobilitatis culmen," *Klio* 62 (1980): 474-480, arguing against, i.a., Wolfgang Seyfarth, "Sextus Petronius Probus: Legende und Wirklichkeit," *Klio* 52 (1970): 413. This is not the only literary portrayal of Sextus Petronius Probus: He may have well provided the model for the arbitrator of the debate between Arius, Photinus and Athanasius in Vigilius of Thapsus' *Contra Arianos, Sabellianos, Photinianos Dialogus* (CPL 807), as I argued in Hajnalka Tamas, "From Persecutor to Arbitrator of Orthodoxy: The Changing Face of Sextus Petronius Probus between the Fourth and the Fifth Century," in *The Fifth Century: Age of Transformation: Proceedings of the 12th Biennial Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity Conference*, ed. Jan Willem Drijvers and Noel Lenski, Munera 46 (Bari: Edipuglia, 2019), 297-306.

⁸⁸ The rehabilitation of Probus in light of a comprehensive view on the available sources was undertaken by both Seyfarth, "Sextus Petronius Probus," 411-425 (who maintained that Ammianus is dependent in his negative view on Probus' political opponents in the Roman Senate) and Novak, "Anicianae domus culmen," 481-493. More recently, Jan Willem Drijvers, "Decline of Political Culture: Ammianus Marcellinus' Characterization of the Reigns of Valentinian and Valens," in *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Deborah Deliyannis and Edward Watts (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 90-91 has showed that Ammianus' portrayal of Probus is an integral part of his overall criticism of Valentinian's and Valens' reign.

his personality and the way he carried out his duties.⁸⁹ Contemporary sources such as Jerome and Ammianus were ready to attribute the troubles of those times, the general imperial lack of interest in Pannonia, the events of 374 AD, when the barbarian incursions reached as far as Sirmium, to the deficient administration of Sextus Petronius Probus. Ammianus tells us that, while residing in Sirmium, he neglected the defensive systems and, in 374, when faced with Barbarian invasions, first thought about escaping rather than facing the enemy.⁹⁰ Jerome concurs with Ammianus in accusing Sextus Petronius Probus that he implemented with savagery the taxation policy of Valentinian I.⁹¹

If these sources, located in parts of the empire other than Illyricum (but with a manifest interest in this region), could make Probus responsible, it is easily imagined how much more he was blamed by the locals – perhaps even unto portraying him as a persecutor of Christians.⁹²

The contrast with the portrait of Valentinian I in the *Passio Pollionis* further substantiates this hypothesis. The hagiographer titled Valentinian I “christianissimus imperator,”⁹³ lending substance to the image of this emperor as protector of his native province. In reality, Valentinian offered little cause for such endearment, seldom returning there, and seemingly oblivious to the fiscal burden he was setting on the province.⁹⁴ His policy of concord left Sirmium in the grips of an Arian bishop.⁹⁵ But if liability for the many administrative shortcomings fell on the prefect, seen as a scapegoat, the hagiographer of Pollio, along with other writers, were free to hold Valentinian in such high esteem.⁹⁶

⁸⁹ Ammianus, *Hist.* 27.11 (ed. Marié, 137-139); 28.1.32-3 (ed. Marié, 155); 29.6.8-11 (ed. Sabbath, 48-49); 30.5.4-11 (ed. Sabbath, 74-76).

⁹⁰ Ammianus, *Hist.* 29.6.9-11 (ed. Sabbath, 48). See Mócsy, *Pannonia*, 294 and 310; and Fitz, *L'administration*, 41. *PLRE*, 1:737, s.v. “Probus 5,” adducing as supporting evidence Libanius, *Oratio* 24.12, considers that Ammianus’ account refers to events taking place in 372 AD.

⁹¹ Jerome, *Chronicon* ad ann. 372 (ed. Helm, 264.18-21): “Probus praefectus Illyrici iniquissimus tributorum exactionibus ante provincias quas regebat, quam a barbaris vastarentur, erasit,” Ammianus, *Hist.* 30.5.4-10 (ed. Sabbath, 74-76).

⁹² The possibility that behind the character of the persecuting Probus one might envisage Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus has already been stated by Dolbeau, at the suggestion of A. Chastagnol. See Dolbeau, “Le dossier,” 207n17. Nagy, *Pannoniai városok*, 40, dismisses the conjecture. He argues that Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus could hardly have provided material for a cruel persecutor since he was considered a Christian and had good relations with Ambrose and emperor Theodosius. Nonetheless, we have seen that Jerome himself, who maintained close contacts with the *gens Anicia*, did not hesitate to highlight the *iniquitas* of the prefect. Of Probus’ “good relations” with Ambrose we are informed only by Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 5 and 8 (ed. Pellegrino, 56.3 and 60.9-11). Interestingly enough, Ambrose himself never mentions his illustrious patron.

⁹³ I discuss this in more detail in the following chapter. See below, III.2.1.

⁹⁴ Ammianus, *Hist.* 30.5.7 (ed. Sabbath, 75).

⁹⁵ Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 238-241; R. Malcolm Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius*, Studies in the History of Greece and Rome (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 188-192. A Nicene bishop of Sirmium could be ordained only in 376 AD, and even then with the contest of Ambrose, who clashed for the first time with empress Iustina at that occasion. Cf. Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 11 (ed. Pellegrino, 64.1-66.14).

⁹⁶ A decade after his death, Valentinian I was conveniently portrayed as a Christian who acknowledged and respected episcopal authority. See David Hunt, “Valentinian and the Bishops: Ammianus 30.9.5 in

In this case, we have a rather secure support for establishing the *terminus post quem* of the composition of the *Passio Irenaei* for the last three decades of the fourth century. Perhaps we can venture as far as setting 374 AD as the trigger for such a negative depiction of Petronius Probus, but this represents nothing more than speculation. On the basis of all the evidence adduced above, we can state that the *Passio Irenaei* had been written in the 370s to 380s AD, if not prior to the *Passio Pollionis*, at least in the same period.

2.3. Historical Reliability

Although I already touched upon the issue in previous sections, it is worthwhile to dwell on the historical reliability of the *Passio Irenaei* a minute longer. That there was a martyr named Irenaeus, who had been put to death at Sirmium, is unquestionable. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence confirms that locals had dedicated a cult to the martyr already in the second half of the fourth century. His place of execution can be identified quite securely.⁹⁷ It is to be expected, therefore, that some memory of him, of his deeds in court and the manner of his death was being kept alive. Since the *Passio Irenaei* was meant to be used in liturgy,⁹⁸ it couldn't have departed too far from the (minimal?) data preserved in collective memory, in which the cult was grounded. The hagiographer's imagination, one would suppose, was not free from constrictions in this case.

Still, the amount of historical information traceable in the *Passio Irenaei* is a matter of scholarly debate. Does the sequence of events narrated in the *Passio* coincide with what happened in reality, and to which degree? In mid-twentieth century Simonetti believed that the *Passio Irenaei* is nothing more than a patchwork of hagiographic commonplaces. In contrast, recent historians and scholars such as Mirja Jarak defended its documentary importance.⁹⁹ We have seen that Dolbeau identified a series of non-conventional themes that could point to genuine historical elements. Hildebrandt noted that the thematic similarities with Cyprian's *Ep. ad Fortunatum* do not necessarily undermine the historical reliability of the *Passio Irenaei*. The martyr himself might have been aware of Cyprian's letter. *Ep. ad Fortunatum* had a wide circulation already at the beginning of the fourth century, possibly also because it was meant to offer guidelines precisely in situations of potential martyrdom. Thus, Irenaeus himself could have simply quoted from

Context," in *Ammianus after Julian: The Reign of Valentinian and Valens in Books 26-31 of the Res Gestae*, ed. Jan den Boeft et al., Mnemosyne: Bibliotheca Classica Batava. Monographs on Greek and Roman Language and Literature 289 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 71-72.

⁹⁷ Mirković, "Sirmium," 153.

⁹⁸ Cf. *Pass. Iren.* 1.2: "iam nunc uobis certamen pandam uictoriamque ostendam." The hagiographer addresses the audience in the second person plural, as if in a live session, suggesting that the text had a liturgical destination, possibly during the yearly *panegyris* in honour of Irenaeus. Cf. Anton Benven, "Muka Sv. Ireneja Srijemskoga: Ranokršćanski portret biskupa mučenika," *Diacovensia* 2 (1994): 109.

⁹⁹ Simonetti, *Studi*, 65-73; Jarak, "Martyres," 272-273.

Cyprian's letter, in which case the *Passio Irenaei*, as we have it today, stands close to the proconsular acts.¹⁰⁰

The observations above on the fictitious persecutor and his historical model undermine the *per se* reliability of the *Passio Irenaei*. The hagiographer found a way to be creative in spite of the confines of collective memory. Writing about events that took place almost two generations before, he combined the minimal foundational information of the cult – that Irenaeus was the young bishop of Sirmium; that he had died by sword, on the bridge across the Sava, under one of the persecution edicts issued in 303-304 AD – with a (partially?) invented story clothed in the form of a genuine trial record. The stock-motifs observed by Simonetti point to this conclusion. To this end two other passages can be invoked: *Pass. Iren.* 3.1-2 (the episode when Irenaeus' family and close entourage beg him to recant) and *Pass. Iren.* 4.1 (the second interview with Probus).

The first passage draws inspiration from the *Passio Perpetuae*, where Perpetua's father behaves in a similar way towards the daughter subject to interrogation and torture.¹⁰¹ The second passage claims that Probus held a regular tribunal *media nocte*, an unlikely occurrence from a historical perspective. The edifying purpose of the narrative,¹⁰² the portrayal of the martyr as imitator of Christ,¹⁰³ the Pauline theological outlook¹⁰⁴ also caution against a too ready assumption that the *Passio Irenaei* transmits events as they actually unfolded. Rather, one might surmise that there are nuclei of genuine information skillfully intervoven with fictitious threads that, nonetheless, allude to possible historical situations – if not from the early fourth century, then at least from the redactor's own time.

2.4. Published Editions and Translations

From an editorial point of view, precedence has been given to the Latin version of the *Passio Irenaei*. To date, the Greek version received only one edition, in the Appendix of the third volume for March of the *ActaSS* (BHG 948).

The *editio princeps* of the Latin *Passio Irenaei* was published in the same volume; a revised edition, which collated several other manuscripts, was published by Thierry Ruinart, whence it was taken over by modern collections and translations of martyr-acts (e.g., that of Musurillo). Since its apparition in 1999, François Dolbeau's critical edition published in *Antiquité Tardive* became the *textus receptus* in recent scholarship:

¹⁰⁰ Hildebrandt, "Early Christianity," 60.

¹⁰¹ *Mart. Perpetuae* 3.1-3 (ed. Musurillo, 108.11-18).

¹⁰² One of the redactor's aims, as alluded to at the beginning of the narrative, is to show that Irenaeus was indeed worthy of his name. See *Pass. Iren.* 1.2: "(...) pro modestia sua ingenita et timore diuino cui operibus rectis inseruebat, dignus nomine suo inuentus est."

¹⁰³ See below, the analysis of the *Passio Irenaei* in the third part of this chapter.

¹⁰⁴ On the Pauline inspiration for the portrait of Irenaeus, see Benveniste, "Martyr sv. Irenejá," 96-102.

- "Acta [S. Irenaei episc. et martyris Syrmii in Pannonia]," ed. Godefridus Henschenius and Daniel Papebrochius, *ActaSS Martii*, vol. 3 (Antwerp: Iacobus Meursius, 1668), 556-557.
- Μαρτύριον τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Εἰρηναίου, ed. Godefridus Henschenius and Daniel Papebrochius, *ActaSS Martii*, vol. 3, Appendix, p. 23.
- Acta martyrum sincera et selecta*, ed. Theodoricus Ruinart (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859), 432-434.
- François Dolbeau, "Le dossier hagiographique d'Irénée, évêque de Sirmium," *AnTard* 7 (1999): 211-212.
- Actas de los mártires*, ed. and trans. Daniel Ruiz-Bueno, BAC 75 (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1951), 1024-1031.
- The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, ed. and trans. Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 294-301.
- Les martyrs de la Grande Persécution (304-311)*, trans. A.G. Hamman, Les Pères dans la Foi (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979), 71-74.
- Atti dei martiri*, trans. Giuliana Caldarelli, LCO 14, 2nd ed. (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 1985), 665-669.
- Anton Benvin, "Muka Sv. Ireneja Srijemskoga: Ranokršćanski portret biskupa mučenika," *Diacovensia* 1 (1994): 84-87.
- Actes et passions des martyrs chrétiens des premiers siècles*, trad. Pierre Maraval, Sagesses chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 271-276.
- Petrus Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae antiquae in aetate Tetrarcharum I (A. D. 285-305)*, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae* 6 (Budapest: Pytheas, 2011), 57-62 (Dolbeau edition with the Hungarian translation of Albin Balogh).
- Levente Nagy, *Pannóniai városok, mártírok, ereklyék: Négy szenvedéstörténet helyszínei nyomán – Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia: Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories*, *Thesaurus Historiae Ecclesiasticae in Universitate Quinqueecclesiensi* 1 (Pécs: Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, 2012), 35-38.
- Милена Милин, "Пасија св. Иринеја Сирмијскога," in *Sirmium и на небу и на земљи: 1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика*, 2nd ed. (Sremska Mitrovica: Blago Sirmijuma, 2014), 189-191.

Below I present only the text of BHL 4466 as established by Dolbeau (orthography with -u- instead of -v-). The English translation adapts Herbert Musurillo's translation to meet the new critical text and the dictates of historical and hagiographic terminology: For instance, I preferred to translate *praeses* with "governor" instead of Musurillo's "prefect;" *certamen* (*agon* in the edition of Ruinart, used by Musurillo) with "contest," a term that conveys the agonistic sense better than Musurillo's "conflict." The dialogue with Probus is rendered in the form of court minutes and not in the more narrative style adopted by Musurillo (where sentences like "Irenaeus replied" are inserted as incidental in the direct speech of the protagonist). At ch. 3.1, I opted for the suggestion mentioned in the notes of Musurillo, more appropriate than the version proposed in the main translation ("his wife" vs. "the married women").

Passio sancti Irenaei episcopi

1. Cum esset persecutio sub Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus, quando diuersis agonibus concertantes Christiani, a tyrannis inlata supplicia deuota Deo mente suscipientes, praemiis se perpetuis participes efficiebant. 2. Quod et factum est circa famulum Dei Irenaeum episcopum urbis Sirmiensem, cuius iam nunc uobis
5 certamen pandam uictoriamque ostendam, qui pro modestia sua ingenita et timore diuino cui operibus rectis inseruiebat, dignus nomine suo inuentus est.

2. Comprehensus itaque oblatus est Probo praesidi Pannoniae. Probus praeses dixit ad eum: "Obtemperans praeceptis diuinis sacrificia diis."

Irenaeus respondit: "*Qui diis et non Deo sacrificat eradicabitur.*"

10 2. Probus praeses dixit: "Clementissimi principes iusserunt aut sacrificare aut tormentis succumbere debere."

Irenaeus respondit: "Mihi enim praeceptum est tormenta magis suscipere quam Deum denegans *daemoniis sacrificare.*"

3. Probus praeses dixit: "Aut sacrificia aut faciam te torqueri."

15 Irenaeus respondit: "Gaudeo si feceris ut Domini mei passionibus particeps inueniar."

4. Probus praeses iussit eum uexari. Cumque acerrime uexaretur, dixit ad eum: "Quid dicis, Irenaeae? Sacrifica."

Irenaeus respondit: "Sacrifico per bonam confessionem Deo meo cui semper sacrificauit."

20 3. Aduenientes uero parentes eius uidentes eum torqueri precabantur eum. Hinc pueri pedes eius cum lacrymis amplectentes dicebant: "Miserere tui et nostri, pater." Inde uxoris lugentis uultus aetatem eius praecabantur. 2. Parentum uero omnium luctus et fletus erat super eum, domesticorum gemitus, uicinatorum ululatus et lamentatio amicorum, qui omnes clamantes ad eum dicebant: "Tenerae
25 adulescentiae tuae miserere." 3. Sed, ut dictum est, meliore cupiditate detentus, sententiam Domini ante oculos habens quae dicit: *Si quis me negauerit coram hominibus, et ego negabo eum coram Patre meo qui in caelis est*, omnes ergo despiciens nulli omnino respondit. Festinabat autem ad supernae spem uocationis peruenire.

9 Ex 22:20 || 13 Dt 32:17 || 18 bonam confessionem: 1 Tm 6:12.13 || 25 meliore – detentus: cf. Heb 7:19, 11:16 || 26/27 Mt 10:33 || 28 supernae – uocationis: Eph 1:18, 4:4 cum Phil 3:14

4 famulum Dei: *Pass. Quir.* VII.1 || 7 comprehensus... oblatus: *Pass. Poll.* II.3; *Pass. Iuli* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 260.3-4); *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 525) || 9 qui – eradicabitur: *Pass. Quir.* III.3; *Pass. Poll.* 4.3; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); *Pass. Phileae* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 344.13-14) || 15 gaudeo: cf. *Pass. Quir.* III.5 || 20/25 cf. *Mart. Perpetuae* 3.1-3 (ed. Musurillo, 108.11-18)

The Martyrdom of Saint Irenaeus, Bishop

1. After a persecution had been unleashed under the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, when the Christians fought together in many different contests, enduring with hearts dedicated to God the punishments inflicted by the tyrants, they achieved a share in the eternal rewards. 2. This was what happened to the servant of God Irenaeus, bishop of the city of Sirmium, whose contest and victory I now wish to make manifest to you. By his innate modesty and by the fear of God which governed all his good deeds, he was found worthy of the name he bore.

2. Thus, he was arrested and brought before Probus, the governor of Pannonia. The governor Probus said to him: "In obedience to the divine decrees, offer sacrifice to the gods."

Bishop Irenaeus answered: "*Who sacrifices to the gods and not to God, shall be utterly destroyed.*"

2. The governor Probus said: "The most merciful emperors have ordered you either sacrifice or die by torture."

Irenaeus answered: "My duty is to undergo torture rather than deny my God and *offer sacrifice to demons.*"

3. The governor Probus said: "Offer sacrifice or I shall have you tortured."

Irenaeus answered: "I shall be glad if you force me to share in the passions of my Lord."

4. The governor Probus ordered he be subjected to torture. And while he was being tormented most intensely, [the governor] said to him: "Well, what say you, Irenaeus? Offer sacrifice!"

Irenaeus answered: "By my honest confession [of faith] I am sacrificing to my God, to whom I have always offered sacrifice."

3. But his relatives arrived, and when they saw him being tortured, they began to entreat him. Now his children covered his feet in tears and said: "Father, have pity on yourself, and on us!" Now the looks of his mourning wife implored his youth. 2. And he was being hard-pressed by the weeping and mourning of all his relatives, the groans of servants, the wailing of neighbours, and the crying of friends, all of whom cried out to him, saying: "Have pity on your tender years!" 3. But, as has been said, he was gripped by a much stronger desire, keeping before his eyes the word of the Lord, which says: *Whoever shall deny me before men, I too will deny him before my Father who is in heaven.* And so, despising all of them, he made no reply whatsoever to anyone. For he was in haste to attain the hope of his heavenly calling.

4. Probus praeses dixit: "Quid dicis, Irenaeae? Flectere horum lacrymis ab insania tua et consulens adulescentiae tuae sacrificia."

Irenaeus respondit: "Consulo mihi in perpetuo si non sacrificauero."

5. Probus autem iussit eum recipi in custodia carceris. Plurimis uero diebus ibidem clausus poenis est affectus.

4. Quodam autem tempore media nocte procedente et sedente pro tribunali praeside Probo, introductus est iterum beatissimus martyr Irenaeus.

2. Et Probus dixit ad eum: "Iam sacrificia, Irenaeae, lucrans poenas."

Irenaeus respondit: "Fac, quod iussum est. Hoc a me ne expectes."

10. 3. Probus iterum uexatum eum fustibus caedi praecepit.

Irenaeus respondit: "Deum habeo quem a prima aetate colere didici, ipsum adoro qui me confortat in omnibus, cui etiam et sacrifico. Deos uero manu factos adorare non possum."

4. Probus dixit: "Lucrare mortem. Iam tibi sufficient quae tolerasti tormenta."

15. Irenaeus respondit: "Lucror continuo mortem quando per eas quas mihi putas inferre poenas, quas ego non sentio, propter Deum accepero uitam aeternam."

5. Probus dixit: "Filios habes?"

Irenaeus respondit: "Non habeo."

Probus dixit: "Parentes habes?"

20. Irenaeus respondit: "Non habeo."

6. Probus dixit: "Et qui fuerunt illi qui praeterita flebant sessione?"

Irenaeus respondit: "Praeceptum est Domini mei Iesu Christi dicentis: *Qui diligit patrem aut matrem aut uxorem aut filios aut fratres aut parentes super me, non est me dignus.*" 7. Atque ad Deum in caelis aspiciens et ad eius promissiones intendens omniaque despiciens nullum absque eum se nosse atque habere fatebatur.

25. 8. Probus dixit: "Scio te filios habere, uel propter illos sacrificia."

Irenaeus respondit: "Filii mei Deum habent quem et ego, qui potens est illos saluare. Tu autem fac quod tibi praeceptum est."

9. Probus dixit: "Consule tibi, iuuenis. Immola ut non te uariis cruciatibus impendam."

30. Irenaeus respondit: "Fac, quod uis. Iam nunc uidebis quantam mihi Dominus Iesus Christus dabit tolerantiam aduersus tuas insidias."

10. Probus dixit: "Dabo in te sententiam."

Irenaeus respondit: "Gratulor si feceris."

12 confortat – omnibus: Josh 1:9, cf. Phil 4:13 || 15 lucrur – mortem: cf. Phil 1:21 (Benveniste, "Muka sv. Ireneja," 100) || 22/24 Mt 10:37 cum Lk 14:26

6 media nocte: cf. Pass. Quir. IV.3 || 9 fac – est: Pass. Poll. IV.4; Pass. Petri Balsami 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); cf. Acta Cypriani 3.5 (ed. Musurillo, 172.12-13); cf. Ep. Phileae 9 (ed. Musurillo, 322.34-36); cf. Pass. Quir. II.6 || 12 confortat: cf. Pass. Quir. II.5 || 16 poenas – sentio: cf. Pass. Quir. III.5 || 29 consule tibi: Acta Cypriani 3.4 (ed. Musurillo, 172.11-12)

4. The governor Probus said: "What say you, Irenaeus? Turn away from your madness on account of their tears, think of your youth, and offer sacrifice."

Irenaeus answered: "I take thought of myself for ever if I do not sacrifice."

5. Probus ordered he be taken back to the confinement of the prison. Locked up there for very many days, he was afflicted with punishments.

4. Then, one day, when the governor Probus made a public appearance about midnight and sat for judgment, the most blessed martyr Irenaeus was brought before him again.

2. And Probus told him: "Come now, Irenaeus, offer sacrifice and spare yourself suffering."

Irenaeus answered: "Do what you have been ordered. [But] do not expect this of me."

3. Probus ordered another torture, that he be beaten with clubs.

Irenaeus answered: "I have a God whom I learned to worship since I was a mere child. Him I worship who comforts me in all things and to him I offer sacrifice. But I cannot worship gods made by human hands."

4. Probus said: "Spare yourself death. Let the tortures you have suffered thus far be enough."

Irenaeus answered: "I do continually spare myself death in so far as I gain eternal life from God through the torments which you think you inflict on me, but which I do not feel."

5. Probus said: "Do you have children?"

Irenaeus answered: "I do not."

Probus said: "Do you have relatives?"

Irenaeus answered: "I do not."

6. Probus said: "Then who were the people who were weeping at the last hearing?"

Irenaeus answered: "There is a commandment from my Lord Jesus Christ who says: *He who loves his father or his mother or his wife or his children or his brethren or his family more than me, is not worthy of me.*" 7. [For this reason,] looking to God in heavens and bearing in mind his promises and despising all else, he insisted that he neither had nor knew any other kin apart from [God].

8. Probus said: "I know you have children, at least offer sacrifice for their sake."

Irenaeus answered: "My sons have the same God I do. He can save them. You simply do what you have been ordered."

9. Probus said: "Take thought of yourself, young man. Offer sacrifice, lest I have you consumed by various tormenting devices."

Irenaeus answered: "Do what you will. You shall see now what endurance the Lord Jesus Christ will give me against your stratagems."

10. Probus said: "I am going to pronounce sentence on you."

Irenaeus answered: "I shall be grateful if you would."

11. Probus data sententia dixit: "Irenaeum inoboedientem praeceptis regalibus in fluuium praecipitari praecipio."

12. Irenaeus respondit: "Multifarias minas tuas et tormenta plurima expectabam, ut etiam post haec me ferro subiceres. Tu autem nihil horum intulisti. Vnde hoc facias
5 oro ut cognoscas quemadmodum Christiani propter fidem quae est in Deo mortem contemnere consueverunt."

5. Iratus itaque Probus super fiduciam beatissimi uiri, iussit eum etiam gladio percuti. 2. Sanctus uero Dei martyr, tamquam secundam palmam accipiens, Deo gratias agebat dicens: "Tibi gratias ago, Domine Iesu Christe, qui mihi per uarias
10 poenas et tormenta donas tolerantiam et aeternae gloriae me participem efficere dignatus es." 3. Et cum uenisset ad pontem qui uocatur Basentis, expolians se uestimenta sua et extendens manus in caelum orauit dicens: 4. "Domine Iesu Christe, qui pro mundi salute pati dignatus es, pateant caeli tui et suscipiant angeli spiritum serui tui Irenaei, qui propter nomen tuum et plebem tuam productus de ecclesia tua
15 catholica haec patior. 5. Te peto tuamque deprecor misericordiam ut et me suscipere et hos in fide tua confirmare digneris." 6. Sic itaque percussus gladio, a ministris proiectus est in fluuium Sauī.

6. Martyrizauit famulus Dei sanctus Irenaeus episcopus ciuitatis Sirmiensem die VIII. idus aprilis sub Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus, agente Probo
20 praeside, regnante Domino nostro Iesu Christo cui est gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

13/14 suscipiant – tui: *cf.* Is 42:1; Acts 7:58

1 praeceptis regalibus: *Pass. Quir.* VI.5; *Pass. Iuli* 3 (ed. Musurillo, 264.4) || **5/6** Christiani – consueuerunt: *cf. Pass. Poll.* III.12 || **12/16** domine – digneris: *cf. Pass. Poll.* I.3 || **16** hos – confirmare: *cf. Pass. Quir.* III.5 || **18** famulus Dei: *Pass. Quir.* VII.1

11. Then, delivering sentence, Probus said: "Because Irenaeus disobeyed the imperial edicts, I hereby order he be thrown into the river."

12. Irenaeus answered: "I was expecting more of your many threats, and all sorts of tortures, so that only after them you should put me through the sword. But you have done none of these things. Hence I beg you to do so, that you may see how the Christians are wont to despise death because of the faith they have in God."

5. And so, Probus, angered over the confidence of the most blessed man, ordered he be also beheaded. 2. Then the holy martyr of God, as though he were receiving a second victory-palm, thanked God by saying: "I thank you, Lord Jesus Christ, for giving me this endurance in the midst of various sufferings and tortures and for judging me worthy to share in eternal glory." 3. When he arrived at the bridge called Basentis, he took off his clothes and, raising his arms to heaven, prayed, saying: 4. "Lord Jesus Christ, who deigned to suffer for the salvation of the world, let your heavens open and your angels take up the soul of your servant Irenaeus, who, singled out from your catholic¹⁰⁵ Church, suffers all this for your name and for your people. I beg you and I implore your mercy that you will deign both to receive me and to confirm them in your faith." 6. And thus, stricken with the sword, the executioners threw him into the river Sava.

6. The holy servant of God Irenaeus, bishop of the town of Sirmium, was martyred on the eighth day before the Ides of April under the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, with Probus acting as governor, under the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is glory for ever. Amen.

¹⁰⁵ Meaning: universal Church.

3. IRENAEUS, BISHOP AND IMITATOR OF CHRIST

The aim of this section is to highlight the way the redactor of the *Passio Irenaei* sketched the bishop's portrait. This analysis involves considerations on the theology of martyrdom explicitly formulated as well as implied in the text. It also underlines the possible receptions of Irenaeus' portrait by readers contemporary with the *passio's* redactor. In other words, it is equally an audience-oriented analysis, discussing the impact of this hagiography on its target-audience.

Since the *passio* had been composed for liturgical purposes, to serve Irenaeus' cult at Sirmium, the primary audience which interacted with the text must have been the local Christian community. My analysis unfolds on two levels: Firstly, the level of literary expression (examination of the theology of martyrdom); and secondly, the level of the (potential) historical reception of the *Passio Irenaei*, its contribution to the shaping / sharpening of local Christian identity. I will proceed by thematic arrangement, trying, as much as possible, to respect the narrative line of the *passio*.

It immediately strikes the observer that the chief means of realizing Irenaeus' portrait is direct speech, namely, the words of the protagonist himself. Redactorial interventions are few, mainly comments to orient the reader's attention. The prologue, drawing attention to Irenaeus' achievement of eternal rewards, represents a suitable example: "Christiani ... praemiis se perpetuis participes efficiebant. Quod et factum est circa famulum Dei Irenaeum, cuius iam nunc uobis certamen pandam uictoriamque ostendam."¹⁰⁶ The redactor offers here the key through which Irenaeus achieved these rewards: Firstly, like all other martyrs, he had a spirit devoted to God; secondly, his meekness and fear of God, which governed his entire life, enabled him to conquer his persecutors.¹⁰⁷ These personal traits, although not necessarily emphasised in the rest of the *passio*, complete nonetheless Irenaeus' portrait and suggest that the redactor saw martyrdom as the coronation of a truly Christian spirit and lifestyle. Therefore, whoever might read the *Passio Irenaei*, should understand that the bishop had led an exemplary life, which he adhered to even unto martyrdom. He is an *exemplum* to which Christians of posterity should rise up to.

Later on, when Irenaeus is visited by his relatives and dependants, the redactor emphasises the bishop's strict adherence to the words of the Scripture. He also gives the reason behind such behavior: a desire for higher things took hold of Irenaeus, and he aspired to be called by God: "melior cupiditate detentus, sententiam Domini ante oculos habens... [F]estinabat autem ad supernae spem uocationis peruenire" (we are

¹⁰⁶ *Pass. Iren.* 1.1-2.

¹⁰⁷ *Pass. Iren.* 1.1: "diuersis agonibus concertantes Christiani, a tyrannis inlata supplicia deuota Deo mente suscipientes, praemiis se perpetuis participes efficiebant;" *Pass. Iren.* 1.2: "[Irenaeus], qui pro modestia sua ingenita et timore diuino cui operibus rectis inseruiebat, dignus nomine suo inuentus est."

to understand that the call was for eternal life).¹⁰⁸ This is the second pillar on which the *Passio Irenaei* is built. Martyrdom is a vocation, a call from God. This call draws partly on Scripture, particularly on the Pauline epistles,¹⁰⁹ but it is also a charismatic call in reward for Irenaeus' genuine, if not outstanding, Christian being.¹¹⁰ The Christian self is expressed as *imitatio Christi*, a topos that we shall see unfold in Irenaeus' words themselves. Finally, the redactor has one other intervention during the second hearing before Probus. He explains why Irenaeus denied his family thus: "Atque ad Deum in caelis aspiciens et ad eius promissiones intendens omniaque despiciens nullum absque eum se nosse atque habere fatebatur."¹¹¹ The message parallels the previous redactorial intervention, both being inspired by Pauline theology. We learn, then, that the bishop concentrated only on God and his promises (of eternal life); for him, nothing had any importance compared to God.

Other than these key comments, the redactor leaves the image of Irenaeus to gain weight as the reader progresses through his trial. Several stock-themes emerge, to which I now turn.

3.1. Steadfastness in the Faith and the Imitation of Christ

Conforming to the mainstream theology of martyrdom, Irenaeus emphasises steadfastness in the faith, in the direst of circumstances – and the reward that comes with it: salvation and eternal life.¹¹² Presented to Probus, Irenaeus refuses outright to sacrifice to pagan gods, since he considers them demons. The Scriptural passage he invokes is Ex 22:20, a favoured quotation in hagiography.¹¹³ Immediately after, he equates the pagan gods to demons, and claims that he must rather take on torments than sacrifice to these demons, for these torments render him a partaker of Christ's suffering: "Probus praeses dixit: "Aut sacrifica, aut faciam te torqueri." Irenaeus respondit: "Gaudeo si feceris ut Domini mei passionibus particeps inueniar."¹¹⁴ The verb "inueniar" points to Irenaeus' earnest desire to imitate Christ both by his Christian lifestyle and in his suffering. The *imitatio Christi* is a typical feature of hagiographic texts, one of its major expressions being the trope of the martyr as *alter Christus*.¹¹⁵ This hagiographic trope lent itself very well to identity-formative discourses, since it expressed the quintessence of Christian life and belief.¹¹⁶ At the same time, it transformed the martyrs into examples of how one can achieve this

¹⁰⁸ *Pass. Iren.* 3.3.

¹⁰⁹ As shown by Benveniste, "Muka sv. Ireneja," 96-102.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Mart. Carpi* 4.1 (ed. Musurillo, 32.13); *Pass. Mariani* 2.3 (ed. Musurillo, 196.4-5).

¹¹¹ *Pass. Iren.* 4.7.

¹¹² Among the Pannonian texts, see *Pass. Quir.* III.2; and *Pass. Poll.* III.11.

¹¹³ *Pass. Iren.* 2.1. Several *passiones* analysed here contain this Scriptural citation.

¹¹⁴ *Pass. Iren.* 2.3.

¹¹⁵ See, among others, *Mart. Apollonii* 47 (ed. Musurillo, 102.22-25); *Pass. Fructuosi* 7.2 (ed. Musurillo, 184.7-12).

¹¹⁶ See Moss, *The Other Christs*, 19-20.

genuine Christian life and belief. The implicit message here is that, through imitating the martyrs, one also imitates Christ – and becomes a true Christian.

Imitatio Christi governs the bishop's behavior throughout the entire *passio*. He counters Probus' every attempt to make him sacrifice by expressing in various ways his steadfastness in the faith, underscored by explicit assertions that Irenaeus imitates the Lord: When asked by the *praeses* to heed to his relatives and think of his youth, Irenaeus states that he is rather focused on the prospect of eternal life. This is the reason why he refuses to sacrifice.¹¹⁷ Next, during the second interrogation, he stubbornly responds to torture by a bold declaration of faith: "Deum habeo quem a prima aetate colere didici, ipsum adoro qui me confortat in omnibus, cui etiam et sacrifico."¹¹⁸

Then, in a clever word-play, he claims that the torments inflicted upon him are a way of defying death and achieving eternal life: "Probus dixit: 'Lucrare mortem.' (...) Irenaeus respondit: 'Lucror continuo mortem quando per eas quas mihi putas inferre poenas ... propter Deum accepero uitam aeternam.'" Moreover, God assists him in this endeavour in such a way that he does not feel any pain ("poenas quas ego non sentio...").¹¹⁹ He goes as far as to ask for more torture, so that his martyrdom might be an example of the endurance God granted to Christians.¹²⁰ One should not confuse this with the often criticised "voluntary martyrdom" (self-denouncement). The eagerness to set an example has to do with the edificational function of the act of martyrdom. It is also related to the solidarity between the bishop and the Christian community: Irenaeus consciously wants to set himself as an *exemplum* of successful *imitatio Christi*.

Finally, after the death sentence was pronounced, Irenaeus thanks God for deeming him worthy of share in eternal life: "Tibi gratias ago, Domine Iesu Christe, qui mihi per uarias poenas et tormenta donas tolerantiam et aeternae gloriae me participem efficere dignatus es."¹²¹ We see that the bishop, although not yet martyred, is certain of his own victory and of the rewards to come.

3.2. The Bishop as Sacrifice to God and Mediator between God and Humans

The sacrificial self-perception of Irenaeus is also part of *imitatio Christi*. Although not as fully articulated as in, e.g., the *Passio Quirini*,¹²² the theme of the martyr as a sacrifice to God appears also in the *Passio Irenaei*. During the first interrogation, Irenaeus claims that his very confession before the *praeses* is a sacrifice

¹¹⁷ *Pass. Iren.* 3.4: "Consulo mihi in perpetuo si non sacrificauero."

¹¹⁸ *Pass. Iren.* 4.3.

¹¹⁹ *Pass. Iren.* 4.4.

¹²⁰ *Pass. Iren.* 4.9,12.

¹²¹ *Pass. Iren.* 5.2.

¹²² *Passio Quir.* III.5. Cf. chapter I.3.2 above.

to the true God: “Sacrifico per bonam confessionem Deo meo cui semper sacrificauī.”¹²³ Considering that at the time confessing the *nomen Christianum* alone was punishable by death sentence, one can but conclude that Irenaeus perceives himself as a sacrifice, just as Christ sacrificed himself for mankind’s sake. To this points also the bishop’s final prayer: “Domine Iesu Christe, qui pro mundi salute pati dignatus es, pateant caeli tui et suscipiant angeli spiritum servi tui Irenaei, qui propter nomen tuum et plebem tuam ... haec patior.”¹²⁴ Irenaeus is fully aware that he suffers for the sake of the Christian community.

This motif of the bishop’s death as sacrifice is less common, but not unusual in hagiographic literature. It relates to the martyr’s episcopal function. As bishop, Irenaeus represents and is responsible before God for the community entrusted to his care. He mediates between God and humans.

To illustrate this point, I shall briefly refer to the hagiography of another bishop, Felix. The final prayer uttered by Felix contains a more explicit self-perception as sacrifice offered to God:

Deus, gratias tibi, quinquaginta et sex annos habeo in hoc saeculo, uirginitatem custodiui, euangelia seruaui, fidem et ueritatem predicaui. Domine Deus caeli et terrae, Iesu Christe, tibi ceruicem meam ad uictimam flecto, qui permanes in aeternum.¹²⁵

Similarly, Quirinus of Siscia perceives himself as an exemplary sacrifice, for the edification of the flock entrusted to him.¹²⁶ Although in a less radical way, Irenaeus too alludes to the fact that he is offering himself not only for Christ’s sake, but also for the sake of the Christian flock. He does this as an act of imitating the true priest, Christ, who gave himself up for our salvation. This involves the ministerial symbolism and function of Christ’s sacrifice as mediated and transmitted through the bishop. The Christian bishop, ultimately the representative of Christ in a given community, guarantees an authentic mediation between the divine and the human. In this sense, Irenaeus becomes indeed a mediator between Christians and God. Martyrdom is, for him, the accomplishment of his episcopal vocation.

3.3. The Bishop’s Solidarity with the Community and Episcopal Teaching

Irenaeus’ final prayer is important for another motif: the solidarity of the bishop with his community and even with the Christian people at large. Irenaeus states that he is singled out as martyr from among the entire people of God: “propter... plebem tuam productus de ecclesia tua catholica haec patior.”

¹²³ *Pass. Iren.* 2.4.

¹²⁴ *Pass. Iren.* 5.4-5.

¹²⁵ *Pass. Felicis* 30 (ed. Musurillo, 271.5-8).

¹²⁶ See *Pass. Quir.* III.5 and the commentary to this passage in chapter I.3.2. See also Tamas, “Martyrdom,” 86-87.

The passage deserves further attention. The Bollandist edition, based on a late manuscript, read “de ecclesia tua catholica Sirmiensem.”¹²⁷ This led scholars to infer the existence of heterodox communities in Sirmium.¹²⁸ Such interpretation is given some substance by the tumultuous doctrinal history of Sirmium, which had in mid-fourth century Photinian and Homoean bishops. Moreover, as Miroslava Mirković suggested, it is possible that the necropolis around Irenaeus’ *martyrium* was favoured by Nicene Christians.

Christian burials are attested in two extra-mural cemeteries outside Sirmium, one around the *martyrium* of Irenaeus (to the East), and the other around the *martyrium* of Syneros (to the North). Based on prosopographical analysis and on signs of intentional damaging of epitaphs and graves, Mirković concluded that the northern cemetery was preferred for Homoean burials, whereas the eastern site was used by Nicenes.¹²⁹ I shall elaborate on this theory in ch. IV. Suffice to remark here that, were burial practices to correspond to a Nicene – Homoian segregation (as Mirković proposed), *catholica* in Irenaeus’ prayer could be interpreted as referring indeed to the Nicene community.

However, the critical edition elaborated by Dolbeau makes it clear that *Sirmiensem* is a late interpolation. Irenaeus, in fact, speaks about the universal Church of God (*ecclesia catholica*). The topos is again quite common in hagiographic literature. We already encounter this sense of representation and responsibility for the universal Christian community in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*.¹³⁰ A closer parallel to Irenaeus’ words is the reply that bishop Fructuosus gave to a soldier who was trying to commend himself to the bishop:

(...) accessit ad eum commilito frater noster nomine Felix et apprehendit dextram eius rogans ut sui memor esset. Cui Fructuosus cunctis audientibus clara uoce respondit: “In mente me habere necesse est ecclesiam catholicam ab oriente usque in occidentem.”¹³¹

Just like Fructuosus, Irenaeus too sees himself as the representative of the entire Church. He dies for the entire people of God. It should be noted that in the passage referring to Irenaeus’ martyrdom, the redactor of the *Passio Pollionis* picks precisely on the theme of solidarity between the bishop of a given community and the mass of Christians at large (echoing, as stated above, the bishop’s final prayer).

The *Passio Pollionis* offers us another glimpse on how the bishop’s role was perceived in late fourth century Pannonia. At the end of his trial, Pollio claims that: “Me autem oportet episcoporum, presbyterorum et omnium patrum quorum doctrinis

¹²⁷ *Acta [S. Irenaei]* 5 (ed. Henschenius and Papebrochius, 557).

¹²⁸ Jarak, “Martyres,” 272. See also Rajko Bratož, “Christianisierung des Nordadria- und Westbalkanraumes im 4. Jahrhundert,” in Bratož. *Westillyrikum*, 319-329.

¹²⁹ Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 129-130.

¹³⁰ *Mart. Polycarpi* 1 (ed. Musurillo, 3.11-15).

¹³¹ *Pass. Fructuosi* 3.5-6 (ed. Musurillo, 180.9-14).

imbutus sum sequi tota ueritate uestigia.”¹³² This is the closest expression of apostolic tradition in a hagiographic text. It sheds light on Irenaeus’ concern for the Christian community. The bishop is not only its spiritual leader, but also its public spokesperson in word and deed. The primary concern of Irenaeus, even in his last moments of life, is for the flock entrusted to him (as Irenaeus formulates it, “productus de ecclesia tua catholica”). Singled thus out, the bishop’s martyrdom is a voucher for the entire community; far beyond being merely emblematic, it is also in a sense representative for each member of the Church.

3.4. Hagiography and Episcopal Authority in Late Fourth-Century Sirmium

By way of conclusion, I shall offer a few remarks from an audience-oriented perspective: What did this *passio* have to teach about the status of a bishop to its primary audience: late fourth century Christians of Sirmium? One can hardly expect a full-blown discourse on episcopal authority. Yet, like other hagiographies examined here, the *Passio Irenaei* was written in answer to an agenda, its use in the cult of Irenaeus facilitating the appropriation of certain tenets by its target-audience. In particular, the self-awareness of the bishop is noteworthy, as if he were conscious of his central status in the life of the community. The narrative, infused with scriptural citations and allusions, and Irenaeus’ final prayer (corroborated with the passage on apostolic tradition from the *Passio Pollionis*) present the bishop as an exemplary and authoritative interpreter of Scriptures and faith. Irenaeus himself evokes Scripture as the fundament for his conduct as a bishop and as a martyr.

In this sense, the *Passio Irenaei* explains, strengthens, and validates in the eyes of its readers / hearers the rising episcopal authority of the late fourth century. It emphasises the centrality of the bishop, but also his key role in the life of the community.

Finally, the solidarity between bishop and community might be, from the perspective of the audience, reversed: Because the bishop is the representative of the community before men and God, the community ought to follow the bishop completely and unresentfully. Submitting to the authority of the bishop, one practically obeys Christ, since the bishop is the perfect imitator of Christ. Thus, the *Passio Irenaei* was likely to secure the adherence of large Christian communities to a rather strict episcopal authority. Such efforts to emphasise episcopal authority in its various dimensions can be explained when seen against late antique doctrinal debates, which challenged Christian discipline and the institution of episcopacy, too.

¹³² *Pass. Poll.* IV.4.

CHAPTER III

Pollio of Cibalae

(BHL 6869)

1. HAGIOGRAPHIC DOSSIER

Martyrological tradition remembers Pollio as a reader in the early Christian community of Cibalae (modern Vinkovci, Croatia). In the *Passio Pollionis* he is styled “primicerius lectorum,” head of the college of readers, one of the lower clerical orders. His cult in Cibalae is archaeologically attested. His celebration is mentioned in ancient martyrologies, both Latin and Greek, as well as medieval “historical” martyrologies. As with other Pannonian martyrs, his relics were probably transferred from Cibalae. We find evidence of the relic translation in Ravenna and possibly even in Rome. Agnellus of Ravenna tells about an oratory dedicated to Pollio in Ravenna. His *passio* was read and copied there. Medieval Roman itineraries starting with the seventh century mention the tomb of a certain Pollio in the cemetery of Pontianus: Although scholarship debates the identity of this Pollio, it is likely that we are dealing with the Pannonian martyr. Thus:

1.1. Late Antique Liturgical Sources

The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* mentions the name Pollio on four different dates and in three different locations: On the 24th of April in Lugdunum; on the 26th of April in Africa; on the 28th of April in Cibalae; and on the 29th of May again in Cibalae:

ad 24 apr.: In ciuitate Lugduno Gall. Passio Alexandri ... et sancti Pollionis¹

ad 26 apr.: Et in Africa Iuli ... Victoris Simplicii Pullionis, Viti, Calendini, Apolloni...²

ad 28 apr.: In Pannonia Eusebi episcopi Pollionis³

ad 29 mai.: In Ciballis Pullionis lectoris⁴

The first note is probably one of the frequent geo-chronological slips characteristic to the *Hieronymianum*.⁵ Delehayé thought the fourth note to be yet another chronological displacement: The redactor of the *Hieronymianum* accidentally

¹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 24 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 48): Eptern. *Pauliunis*; S. L. M. V. *Pulionis*.

² *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 26 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 49): Eptern. *Pollionis*, *Appolloni*; C. L. M. V. *Pollionis*; Wissenb. *Apulloni*.

³ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 28 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 51).

⁴ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 29 mai. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 68): Eptern., S. C. L. M. V. *Pollionis*.

⁵ Delehayé, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 208. Cf. Aigrain, *L'hagiographie*, 33-39 and 46-47.

confused “IIII. kal. maii” with “IIII. kal. iunii,” reading the month as May instead of April.⁶ However, Petrus Kovács observed that all the variants of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* contain this note, which makes it implausible that it was indeed a slip.⁷ He suggested, therefore, that the note on the 29th of May commemorates a later deposition of Pollio’s relics, in Ravenna.

When compared with the textual transmission of the *Passio Pollionis*, the note on the 26th of April is relevant both on account of the date and the association to a certain saint Ap(p)ollonius. It helps elucidate the martyr’s name and the date of his death as transmitted by the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*:⁸ Here the date of Pollio’s martyrdom appears as a variant, “VI. kal. maii” – however, the liturgical date indicated is the 29th of April.⁹ The copyists of the Austrian legendary thought that Pollio had suffered martyrdom on the 26th of April, but celebrated him on the 29th of April. This branch of textual transmission reads also the martyr’s name in a peculiar form, Ap(p)ollio/Ap(p)ollonio. The similarities with the *Hieronymianum* cannot be coincidental. In the note on the 26th of April, “Ap(p)olloni” could simply be a corruption of “Pollionis” / “Pollionis.”¹⁰ Even if this were not the case, the association between the two names in this note might explain the initial ‘A’ added to Pollio’s name in the codices of the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*. In all likelihood, the archetype of the Austrian legendary or an earlier exemplar from which this archetype copied the *Passio Pollionis* was influenced by the *Hieronymianum*’s note on the 26th of April, and thus changed the date and the name.

Again, the comparison with the *Passio Pollionis* verifies that Pollio’s late antique *dies natalis* was the 28th of April. In the corresponding note Pollio is associated with Eusebius, just as the *passio* refers to Eusebius, a bishop of Cibalae who purportedly suffered martyrdom in an earlier persecution. In Delehaye’s reconstruction, the note reads:

ad 28 apr.: In Pannonia Cibalīs Eusebii episcopi, Pollionis lectoris¹¹

On the same date, the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* honours a certain Puplion / Publios, whom Hippolyte Delehaye identified with Pollio of Cibalae.¹² He

⁶ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 280; Zeiller, *Les origines*, 74n2.

⁷ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78.

⁸ Heiligenkreuz, Stiftsbibl. H 12 (last quarter of the twelfth century); Zwettl, Stiftsbibl. 24 (first quarter of the thirteenth century); Admont, Stiftsbibl. 24 (thirteenth century); Wien, ÖNB 336 (mid-thirteenth century); Melk, Stiftsbibl. 97 (second half of the fifteenth century). See Tamas, “*Passio Pollionis*,” 20–22.

⁹ See Albert Poncelet, “De magno legendario austriaco,” *AnBoll* 17 (1898): 58.

¹⁰ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 211n22.

¹¹ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 215. In contrast, Efthymios Rizos, “Record E01095,” *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01095> (accessed 21.03.2021), considers that the late antique anniversary of both Pollio and Eusebius was on the 26th of April.

¹² Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 211; cf. also Delehaye, review of *Les origines*, 400; and Hippolyte Delehaye, *Commentarius in martyrologium Romanum*, ActaSS Decembris Propylaeum (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1940), 160.

based his argument on the observations of Jacques Zeiller concerning the Eastern cult of Irenaeus of Sirmium: According to Zeiller, the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* included Irenaeus in its list for the 29th of April because the *Passio Pollionis* referred to Irenaeus by name: The synaxarist was led to associate the celebration of the two martyrs, Pollio on the 28th of April as per the *Passio Pollionis*, followed by Irenaeus on the 29th of April.¹³ Delehaye took this as a sign that Pollio was known in the Eastern martyrological tradition, and the closest parallel is Puplion / Publios, attested in the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* on the 26th, the 27th, and the 28th of April. This opinion is shared by other scholars.¹⁴

On the 28th of April, the synaxary thus reads:

ad 28 apr.: Τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἄθλησις τοῦ ἁγίου μάρτυρος Πουπλίωνος¹⁵

Zeiller's theory implies that the *Passio Pollionis* was known and read in the East. Yet earlier martyrological tradition and, to a certain extent, even the Constantinopolitan synaxary contradict this supposition. Regardless of the form (Pollio, Pullio, Puplion or Publios), the name is unknown to the *Martyrologium Syriacum*, which in contrast does mention Irenaeus of Sirmium. It seems that the note cited above is an innovation of the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* with respect to earlier martyrologies.¹⁶ A *terminus post quem* for Pollio's inclusion could be then set to the sixth century, when the core of the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* is thought to have been compiled.

The synaxary itself leaves no doubt that the *Passio Pollionis* was not the source of this entry. The eulogy on the 26th of April presents Puplion as an Eastern soldier serving under Licinius – without any indications to a possible Pannonian background. Puplion, we are told, assisted at the trial of Basil of Amasea. Impressed by Basil's preaching at the occasion, he threw down his weapons and confessed to be a soldier in the service of the God in heavens. When torture could not make him recant, Licinius condemned him to death by decapitation:

ad 26 apr.: Στρατιώτης ἦν οὗτος ὁ ἅγιος μάρτυς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Πούπλιος, στρατευόμενος ὑπὸ τῷ βασιλεῖ Λικινίῳ καὶ ἀγαπώμενος ὑπ' ἐκείνου διὰ τὸ πολλάκις ἐν πολλοῖς ἀνδραγαθῆσαι πολέμοις. Ὅτε δὲ δέσμιος ἦχθη ἐξ Ἀμασείας ὁ ἅγιος ἱερομάρτυς Βασιλεὺς καὶ σταθεὶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ Λικινίου ἠλεγξεν ἀνδρείως αὐτόν τε καὶ τὴν πλάνην τῶν ἀκαθάρτων δαιμόνων καὶ διεξῆλθε τὰ περὶ τῆς οἰκονομίας τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ῥίψας τὰ ὅπλα καὶ τὴν ζώνην, ἣν περιεβέβλητο, ὡμολόγησεν ἑαυτὸν χριστιανὸν καὶ

¹³ See chapter II.1.1. above.

¹⁴ J.P. Kirsch, "Pollio," *LThK* 8¹ (1936): 352; Ireneo Daniele, "Pollione," *BSS* 10 (1982): 1002; and Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78-79.

¹⁵ *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 28 apr. (ed. Delehaye, 638.4-5).

¹⁶ It is unlikely that the anniversary of Pollio's martyrdom was featured in the Greek martyrology that served as model both for the *Martyrologium Syriacum* and the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* without leaving at least a trace in the former.

τοῦ ἐπουρανίου Θεοῦ δούλον καὶ στρατιώτην. Ὁργισθεὶς οὖν ὁ βασιλεὺς καὶ ἀλλοικώσας τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ τῷ πολλῷ θυμῷ, πρῶτον μὲν διὰ κολακείας ἐσπούδαζεν μεταθεῖναι αὐτὸν τῆς τοιαύτης γνώμης· ὥς δὲ οὐκ ἔπεισεν, ἰσχυρῶς βασάνισας, μαχαίρᾳ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπέτεμεν.¹⁷

Should Puplion be the same person as Pollio, the Eastern martyrologists invented a whole new story to describe his martyrdom.¹⁸ This reveals a flaw in Zeiller's and Delehaye's corroborated argument: Were the *Passio Pollionis* read in the Greek part of the Roman Empire, there would have been no need to invent a biography for Puplion / Publios. It all points to the fact that the *Passio Pollionis* was not known in the Greek world. Nonetheless, the theory cannot be entirely discarded. Irenaeus on the 29th of April is certainly a *curiosum*, and the association with Pollio a convenient explanation. But the association need not happen via the *Passio Pollionis*. It is possible that a synaxarist learned it from a Pannonian sanctoral or calendar. This could have happened during Justinian's restoration of Byzantine rule in Pannonia in the sixth century. Eftymios Rizos already remarked upon the fact that martyrs from Sirmium and Cibalae were celebrated mostly in April, possibly in the course of festivals lasting several days.¹⁹ Such scenario elucidates why Pollio and Irenaeus appear on consecutive days in April, and also that no other knowledge was attached to the names apart from the fact that Irenaeus had been martyred at Sirmium. Pollio's Pannonian origin lost, he was transformed into the soldier-martyr Poupilion.

1.2. Medieval Latin Martyrologies

Among the historical martyrologies, the commemoration of Pollio is first mentioned by Florus. Florus placed Pollio on the 28th of April, and adapted the eulogy of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. He omitted both Eusebius and the name of the town (Cibalae):

ad 28 apr.: In Pannonia, sancti Pollionis martyris²⁰

With Florus, Pollio's feast-day, as recorded in medieval martyrologies, is definitively settled on the 28th of April. His note is literally copied in the martyrologies of Ado and Usuard.²¹

The *Martyrologium Romanum*, in turn, supplemented Usuard's note with a chronological indication referring to the persecution during which Pollio suffered:

ad 28 apr.: In Pannonia sancti Pollionis martyris sub Diocletiano imperatore²²

¹⁷ *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 26 apr. (ed. Delehaye, 629.56-632.26, under "Synaxaria selecta").

¹⁸ Cf. Ernst Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, StT 173 (Vatican: Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, 1953), 12. Delehaye, Review of *Les origines*, 400, believes it was the result of confusion.

¹⁹ Rizos, "Martyrs," 196; Rizos, "Record E01095" (accessed 21.03.2021).

²⁰ Dubois and Renaud, *Édition pratique*, 74.

²¹ Dubois and Renaud, *Le martyrologe d'Adon*, 136; Dubois, *Le martyrologe d'Usuard*, 220.

1.3. Archaeological and Literary Sources

When seeking to examine the history of Pollio's relics, the scholar is confronted with many possibilities, but no certainty – at least none confirmed by solid evidence, such as epigraphic dedications to Pollio of Cibalae. If correctly interpreted, a series of archaeological finds attest his cult in Cibalae. Later literary sources suggest the relics were taken from Cibalae, travelled through Ravenna, and finally reached Rome. Before elaborating on this itinerary, I must caution that the considerations offered below start from sources open to interpretation. They do not build, therefore, an iron-clad theory. Yet, in my opinion they represent the most likely scenario for the translation of Pollio's relics.

1. Excavations conducted in the last century at the outskirts of Cibalae, at Kamenica, revealed a walled architectural complex of vast proportions.²³ Among the various finds were tombs, a substantial collection of stone and marble fragments, coins, and the remains of a monumental construction. This construction faced east and was built over “two underground grave chambers (...), each containing two graves.”²⁴ It was dated to the fourth century AD.²⁵ We are dealing with an enclosed burial complex, probably a site of *inhumatio ad martyres*. Relics of several martyrs may have been deposited in the underground chambers.²⁶

The central construction has been interpreted as a *martyrium* (or martyrial church) dedicated to Pollio at the location of his martyrdom. This interpretation has not yet received epigraphic confirmation. However, Kamenica is situated approximately one Roman mile to the east from the ancient city walls of Cibalae. The *Passio Pollionis* gives this precise indication for the site of Pollio's martyrdom.²⁷ The topographic correspondence makes it likely that some sort of devotional building has been dedicated to Pollio at Kamenica. Thus, the site developed after the relics of Pollio (and other martyrs?) had been deposited there.

Cultic activity at Kamenica seems to have continued undisturbed well into the fifth century, possibly up to the sixth – seventh century.²⁸ This being the case, what

²² Johnson and Ward, *Martyrologium Romanum*, 99.

²³ Migotti, *Evidence*, 22; Ivana Iskra-Janošić, “Colonia Aurelia Cibalae: Entwicklung der Stadt,” in Šašel Kos and Scherrer, *The Autonomous Towns*, 191; Hrvoje Vulić, “Eine frühchristliche Anlage in Kamenica bei Cibalae / Vinkovci: Vorbericht zu den archäologischen Untersuchungen in den Jahren 2012 bis 2015,” in Bugarski et al., *Grenzübergänge*, 133-144.

²⁴ Iskra-Janošić, “Colonia Aurelia Cibalae,” 191.

²⁵ Migotti, *Evidence*, 22 and 32-33 (items II.5, II.6a-c, and II.7); Vulić, “Eine frühchristliche Anlage,” 141 (based on coins issued by members of the Constantinian and Valentinian dynasties).

²⁶ Iskra-Janošić, “Colonia Aurelia Cibalae,” 191.

²⁷ *Pass. Poll.* V.1: “ductus quasi miliario longe a ciuitate, (...) impleuit martyrium intrepidus.” Vulić, “Eine frühchristliche Anlage,” 143, remarks that there are no other extramural sites with corresponding topography.

²⁸ Vulić, “Eine frühchristliche Anlage,” 142.

prompted the relic translation that I address below? Moreover, did these relics represent all that was left of Pollio's earthly body, or they were merely contact-relics?²⁹

Scholars turned their attention especially to the last question, considering that at the beginning of the fifth century the inhabitants, fleeing the region invaded by barbarians, took also the relics in order to protect them from being desecrated.³⁰ This, however, must be nuanced.

Cibalae certainly fell under barbarian threat already in 378 AD, when the first wave of Goths who invaded Pannonia destroyed the city.³¹ Yet civic life continued in Cibalae with some restriction until the Avars destroyed it again. The continued activity at Kamenica and the presence of human remains in the tombs beneath the basilica make it more likely that the relics translated elsewhere were partial or contact-relics meant to help pious refugees in establishing Pollio's cult in places they relocated to. The next attestation of Pollio's cult outside Pannonia points to the fact that the translation happened in the context of the Gothic migrations.

2. Agnellus of Ravenna relates in his *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* that bishop Liberius III was buried in a building consecrated to saint Pollio, which was still in place when Agnellus composed his work:

Sepultusque est (Liberius, n.a.) in monasterio sancti Pullionis, quem suis temporibus aedificatum est, non longe a porta quae vocatur Noua; cuius sepulcrum nobis cognitum est.³²

Liberius III held the episcopal see of Ravenna at the end of the fourth – beginning of the fifth century, so we are discussing an edifice of the late fourth century.³³ Since in Agnellus' vocabulary "monasterium" could mean any ecclesiastical building dedicated to a saint,³⁴ it is difficult to ascertain the shape and function of this edifice. Scholarship advanced several interpretations: extramural mausoleum,³⁵

²⁹ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 79, raised the possibility of a partial translation.

³⁰ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 97 and 376; Mócsy, *Pannonia*, 327; Jarak, "Martyres," 271; Bratož, "Die diokletianische Christenverfolgung," 123.

³¹ Iskra-Janošić, "Colonia Aurelia Cibalae," 171 and 184.

³² Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis* 22 (ed. Deliyannis, 169.18-21).

³³ PCBE 2:1298, s.v. "Liberius III," Rizos, "Record E01095" (accessed 22.03.2021).

³⁴ Frances Trzeciak, "Record E05770," *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E05770> (accessed 22.03.2021).

³⁵ Agnellus von Ravenna, *Liber pontificalis – Bishofsbuch*, übersetzt und eingeleitet von Claudia Nauerth, vol. 1, FC 21/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 134n53; Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. 1: *Geschichte und Monumente* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1969), 23. Cf. also Rafaella Farioli Campanati, "Le tombe dei vescovi di Ravenna dal Tardoantico all'Alto Medioevo," in Duval and Picard, *L'inhumation privilégiée*, 166: "una forma di sepoltura particolarmente distinta che accomuna vescovi e altri personaggi laici, ossia piccoli edifici con specifica destinazione funeraria, veri e propri mausolei – che Andrea-Agnello chiama *monasteria* – siti in zona extramuranea e cimiteriale, collegati in genere con chiese;" and Hans Reinhard Seeliger, "Pollio(n)," *LThK* 83 (1999): 397.

basilica,³⁶ part of an architectural complex dedicated to Illyrian saints by care of the imperial family,³⁷ or monastic oratory.³⁸ The foundation was located on the site of the modern railway station.³⁹ Agnellus might have inferred the dedication to Pollio from an inscription or a mosaic.⁴⁰

Agnellus' report makes it clear that Liberius had commissioned the foundation, but leaves open the question whether it had originally been consecrated with Pollio's relics. This fact generated some debate. Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann thought initially that the dedication to Pollio occurred at a later date in the fifth century.⁴¹ In the second volume of his work on Ravenna, however, he deemed that an earlier deposition was possible. At the end of the fourth century Valentinian II, an emperor with close ties to Pannonia, resided for some time in Ravenna. The cult of a Pannonian martyr from the birthplace of his father, Valentinian I, could have been adopted in Ravenna on his account.⁴² Rafaella Farioli Campanati was able to confirm that the dedication to Pollio happened at the consecration of the "monasterium," either prior to or on the occasion of the bishop's death.⁴³

In this sense, Liberius' burial is to be included in the category of *inhumatio ad sanctos*, in the proximity of reliquaries.⁴⁴ We should envisage this "monasterium" as a martyrial chapel built in such a way as to display the tomb of the chapel's founder, Liberius III. Yvette Duval described this type of *inhumatio ad sanctos* as "chapelles martyriales fondées pour le culte, mais aussi pour accueillir les tombes des fondateurs, et souvent consacrées à l'occasion de la mort de l'un d'eux."⁴⁵ Pollio's relics must have been translated via the imperial court or the entourage of Valentinian II. This gives further substance to the hypothesis that the relics were partial or contact-relics.⁴⁶

In sum, Agnellus' *Liber pontificalis* and modern investigations *in situ* attest to Pollio's cult in Ravenna at the end of the fourth century. The translation of Pollio's relics was not prompted by the barbarian threat, but it was a sign of devotion at a time when the imperial court changed residence. In that, Pollio is a singular case amongst Pannonian martyrs, since the translation was not an attempt to salvage the relics. Furthermore, since the edifice was still standing in the ninth century with the

³⁶ Agostino Amore, "Pollio," *LThK* 82 (1963): 592.

³⁷ Hippolyte Delehaye, "L'hagiographie ancienne de Ravenne," *AnBoll* 47 (1929): 8.

³⁸ Daniele, "Pollione," 1002-1003.

³⁹ Farioli Campanati, "Le tombe," 167.

⁴⁰ Trzeciak, "Record E05770" (accessed 22.03.2021).

⁴¹ Deichmann, *Ravenna*, 1:23 and 45.

⁴² Friedrich Wilhelm Deichmann, *Ravenna: Hauptstadt des spätantiken Abendlandes*, vol. 2: *Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976), 360.

⁴³ Farioli Campanati, "Le tombe," 167.

⁴⁴ Duval, *Auprès des saints*, 55-57.

⁴⁵ Duval, *Auprès des saints*, 60 (cf. also 65). For displaying the sarcophagus in sight, see Farioli Campanati, "Le tombe," 167.

⁴⁶ Duval, *Auprès des saints*, 56, explains how even second degree relics could have served the purpose of consecrating a foundation.

same dedication, we can conclude that in Agnellus' Ravenna Pollio was a known and honoured martyr. The presence of the *Passio Pollionis* in the *passionarium* of Ravenna confirms this view. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to consider that the *Passio Pollionis* had accompanied the relics to Ravenna, especially if the "monasterium" of Liberius was indeed a place of cult. Introducing the new cult also meant spreading the martyr's story, readily available in the *Passio Pollionis*.⁴⁷

Moving further in time and further south, to medieval Rome, three itineraries mention the tomb of a martyr Pollio in the cemetery of Pontianus, on the Via Portuensis: *De locis sanctis martyrum quae sunt foris civitatis Romae*; *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae*; and *Itinerarium Malmesburiense*. The *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae* gives the following description:

(...) Tunc ascendis et pervenies ad Sanctum Anastasium papam et martirem, et in alio Pollion martir quiescit.⁴⁸

Pollio's relics were deposited presumably in a group of cubicles without access inside: "un gruppo di cubicoli, che presentano la particolarità di non avere una porta d'ingresso, ma ciascuno una *fenestella*, nella quale s'introduceva il capo per guardare nell'interno. Dalla decorazione che orna una delle pareti, raffigurante S. Pollione tra Marcellino e Pietro, e i SS. Milix e Pigmenio, si è avanzata l'ipotesi che in quel cubicolo possano essere stati deposti i martiri della pittura".⁴⁹ The fresco dates from the late fifth century and depicts Pollio with a jeweled cup in his hand.⁵⁰ According to Pasquale Testini, Pollio's cubicle was among the most visited in the cemetery, which boasts many martyrs, also of the Great Persecution.⁵¹ In the ninth century, first pope Paschal I ordered the relics be transferred to the basilica Santa Prassede, then pope Sergius II had them deposited in the church San Martino ai Monti.⁵²

The identity of this "Roman" Pollio is disputed. Because the fresco portrays him among Roman martyrs, a number of scholars viewed him, too, as a martyr of the place (i.e., from Rome).⁵³ Other scholars, however, identified him with Pollio of Cibalae,⁵⁴ arguing that a local saint named Pollio is otherwise unattested in Rome.⁵⁵ The silence of the *Hieronymianum*, very well informed on Roman traditions from their most ancient manifestations, on a Roman Pollio confirms this second opinion. Marcellinus

⁴⁷ Hagiographies travelling with relics were not uncommon in Late Antiquity. See, e.g., the late fourth century translation of Sabas' relics and the arrival of the *Passio Sabae* to Cappadocia, as attested in Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 155, 164, and 165 (ed. Courtonne, 80-81 and 97-101).

⁴⁸ Testini, *Archeologia*, 58.

⁴⁹ Testini, *Archeologia*, 190.

⁵⁰ F.C. Husenbeth, *Emblems of Saints: By which They are Distinguished in Works of Art* (Norwich: A.H. Goose & Co, 1882), 173; Joseph Wilpert, *Le pitture delle catacombe romane* (Rome: Desclée, 1903), 453.

⁵¹ Testini, *Archeologia*, 190.

⁵² Agostino Amore, *I martiri di Roma* (Rome: Edizioni Antonianum, 1975), 233.

⁵³ Kirsch, "Pollio," 352; Seeliger, "Pollio(n)," 397; M. Kuhl, "Pollio(n) von Rom," *LCI* 8 (1976): 218.

⁵⁴ Testini, *Archeologia*, 190-191; Amore, *I martiri*, 232-233; Zeiller, *Les origines*, 75n1.

⁵⁵ Amore, *I martiri*, 233; Zeiller, *Les origines*, 75n1.

and Peter were deposited on the Via Labicana, and none of the itineraries we possess mentions them in the Pontianus cemetery. Thus, this puzzling fresco features a peculiar array of martyrs, most probably associated not by virtue of their *locus natalis*, but because they were martyred during the same persecution.⁵⁶

The first conclusion suggested by this source is that in the seventh century Pollio was still honoured as a prominent saint among the many buried in the Pontianus cemetery. All three itineraries include him in the selection of the martyrs they remember by name. Corroborated with Agnellus' *Liber pontificalis*, this helps us establish that Pollio was popular on Italian soil up to the eighth century at least. A second observation concerns the date when the translation took place. The catacomb fresco, dating from the fifth century, provides the *terminus ante quem*. The Roman deposition also suggests that the relics taken out of Pannonia were of sufficient size to be split in two: Some remained in Ravenna, some were taken to Rome.

Concluding: At the end of the fourth century, pious Christians probably affiliated to the imperial court brought some relics associated with the cult of Pollio to Ravenna. Here they were used to consecrate the "monasterium" built by Liberius III, where the bishop was buried. From Ravenna, part of the relics was translated to Rome. The rationale of this second translation escapes us. Perhaps it was motivated by the barbarian advance in Northern Italy, which determined a second wave of refugees, this time towards the south. Finally, in early fifth century they arrived in Rome, where they were buried on the Via Portuensis. While still continuing in Cibalae, Pollio's cult flourished in Italy as well, in Ravenna and in Rome, where he remained a known martyr up to the ninth century. The Roman itineraries from the seventh century held him in high respect. The ninth century papal translations placed his relics in prestigious basilicas. In Ravenna, the "monasterium" consecrated to the Pannonian reader was still in use when Agnellus composed his *Liber pontificalis*.

⁵⁶ Cf. Testini, *Archeologia*, 190.

2. PASSIO POLLIONIS⁵⁷

2.1. Date and Place of Composition

The *Passio Pollionis* begins with a succinct description of the persecution against the Christian clergy in Sirmium, followed by the short eulogy of Cibalae, the town that boasted the birth of an emperor (Valentinian, styled in the *passio* “christianissimus imperator”) and the martyrdom of a bishop, Eusebius. The focus then shifts to the arrest and trial of Pollio, the *primicerius lectorum* in Cibalae. In the course of the ensuing interview, the governor (“praeses”) Probus asks a series of questions which offer Pollio the incentive to explain the basic tenets of the Christian faith. Here Pollio dwells less on dogmatic aspects, but all the more on the right behaviour expected from a Christian. He presents this orthopraxis as something acceptable, even commendable to non-Christians.⁵⁸ Yet the governor remains unmoved, and, when Pollio keeps refusing to offer sacrifice to the gods, Probus sentences him to be burnt at the stake. The *passio* concludes with references to the liturgical celebration of Pollio’s *dies natalis*.

This narrative contains several chronological indicators that can help establish its date of composition. The most glaring is the reference to Valentinian I, the emperor born in Cibalae.⁵⁹ Therefore, an initial *terminus post quem* can be set to the year 364 AD, when Valentinian I was proclaimed emperor. Most of the scholars who dealt with the topic believe that, since the *passio* does not distinguish two Valentinians, it must have been written whilst Valentinian I was still alive and Valentinian II had not yet been proclaimed emperor.⁶⁰ However, the appellation “christianissimus imperator” shows this opinion is untenable.

No other extant source styles Valentinian I as “christianissimus imperator.”⁶¹ The term was first used as imperial title of address after the death of Valentinian I.

⁵⁷ I discussed the arguments set forth below in two articles: Tamas, “*Passio Pollionis*,” 12-18; and Tamas, “Valentinian I,” 82-97.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Pass. Poll.* III.12: “Haec si displicent, optime cognitor, tuo iudicio poteris derogare.”

⁵⁹ *PLRE*, 1:933, s.v. “Flavius Valentinianus 7.” Libanius, *Oratio* 20.25 (ed. Foerster, 433.1-5); Zosimus, *Historia* III.36.2 (ed. Bekker, 173.17-18).

⁶⁰ Amore, “Pollio,” 592; Seeliger, “Pollio(n),” 397; Daniele, “Pollione,” 1002-1003; *Actas de los mártires*, ed. Daniel Ruiz-Bueno, BAC 75 (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1951), 1045; *Acti dei martiri*, trans. Giuliana Caldarelli, LCO 14, 2nd ed. (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 1985), 675, 676n2; Jarak, “Martyres,” 277-278; Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78.

⁶¹ For the *titulatura* of Valentinian I, as transmitted by written sources, see Gerhard Rösch, *ONOMA ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ: Studien zum offiziellen Gebrauch der Kaisertitel in spätantiker und frühbyzantinischer Zeit* (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978), 162.

Notably, Ambrose addressed thus the two sons of Valentinian I, Gratian and Valentinian II, in *Ep. extra coll.* 12 (380 AD) and *Ep.* 72 (384 AD), respectively.⁶²

Both letters deal with sensitive subjects, which strained the relationship between bishop and emperor: In 380 AD, Gratian granted the use of a church in Milan to the Arian congregation, and probably for this reason Ambrose refused his summons twice before writing *Ep. extra coll.* 12.⁶³ The second letter, *Ep.* 72, petitioned Valentinian II to annul his decision to restore the Victoria altar in the Roman Senate. Ambrose had, therefore, ulterior motives to use this title. By “christianissimus” he understood “fidelissimus,”⁶⁴ a person who observes Christian virtues to the highest degree possible, who professes the Nicene theology, and who acts at all times to the benefit of Nicene Christianity. Addressing the emperors as “imperatores christianissimi” was also a reminder of the expectations they ought to meet as Christian emperors.⁶⁵ And Ambrose did not hesitate to set the father, Valentinian I, as the standard against which these expectations were measured.⁶⁶

⁶² Gratian: Ambrose, *Ep. extra coll.* 12 tit.-1 (ed. Zelzer, 219.2-8): “Beatissimo augusto Gratiano et christianissimo principi Ambrosius episcopus. Non mihi affectus defuit, christianissime principum – nihil enim habeo quod hoc verius et gloriosius dicam – non, inquam, mihi affectus defuit, sed affectum verecundia retardavit, quominus clementiae tuae occurrerem.” Valentinian II: Ambrose, *Ep.* 72 tit. (ed. Zelzer, 11.2-3): “Ambrosius episcopus beatissimo principi et christianissimo imperatori Valentiniano;” and *Ep.* 72.3 (ed. Zelzer, 12.18-21): “(...) Ergo cum a te, imperator christianissime, fides Deo vero sit exhibenda, cum ipsius fidei studium, cautio atque devotio, miror quomodo aliquibus in spem venerit, quod debeas aras diis gentium tuo instaurare praecepto (...)” Ambrose may have been the one who adapted the epithet or invented it as an imperial title of address. See Heinz Bellen, “*Christianissimus imperator*: Zur Christianisierung der römischen Kaiserideologie von Constantin bis Theodosius,” in *Politik – Recht – Gesellschaft: Studien zu Alten Geschichte*, Historia. Einzelschriften 115 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 150n1.

⁶³ Timothy D. Barnes, “Ambrose and Gratian,” *AnTard* 7 (1999): 172-174.

⁶⁴ Bellen, “*Christianissimus imperator*,” 162. The theme is recurrent in Ambrose’s funeral sermons for Valentinian II and Theodosius (*De obitu Valentiniani*; *De obitu Theodosii*), in which the emperors are presented as the perfect Christians. Cf. Sophie Lunn-Rockcliffe, “Ambrose’s Imperial Funeral Sermons,” *JEH* 59, no. 2 (April 2008): 197-207.

⁶⁵ Significant is *Ep.* 72.12 (ed. Zelzer, 17.109-116): “Et ideo memor legationis proxime mandatae mihi convenio iterum fidem tuam, convenio mentem tuam, ne vel respondendum secundum huiusmodi petitionem gentilium censeas vel in eiusmodi responsa sacrilegium subscriptionis adiungas. Certe refer ad parentem pietatis tuae, principem Theodosium, quem super omnibus fere maioribus causis consulere consuesti. Nihil maius est religione, nihil sublimius fide.” On Ambrose’s view of the Christian emperor, see Ambrose, *Ep.* 75.4 (ed. Zelzer, 75.26-76.35, addressed to Valentinian II); and 76.19 (ed. Zelzer, 118.161-119.174). Cf. Kenneth M. Setton, *Christian Attitude towards the Emperor in the Fourth Century*, SHEPL 482, reprint ed. (New York: AMS Press, 1967), 109-152; Groß-Albenhausen, *Imperator christianissimus*, 65-78 and 129-143; Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom*, 77-94.

⁶⁶ This is especially visible in his letters to Valentinian II. See, e.g., *Ep.* 72.16 (ed. Zelzer, 19.157-20.170); or *Ep.* 75.2-3 (ed. Zelzer, 74.10-75.25), praising Valentinian I’s support of ecclesiastical autonomy: “Nec quisquam contumacem iudicare me debet, cum hoc asseram, quod augustae memoriae pater tuus [= Valentinianus I] non solum sermone respondit sed etiam legibus suis sanxit: ‘In causa fidei vel ecclesiastici alicuius ordinis eum iudicare debere qui nec munere impar sit nec iure dissimilis.’ Haec enim verba rescripti sunt, hoc est sacerdotes de sacerdotibus voluit iudicare. (...) Quis igitur contumaciter respondit clementiae tuae, ille qui te patris similem esse desiderat an qui vult esse dissimilem? Nisi forte vilis quibusdam tanti imperatoris aestimatur sententia, cuius et fides confessionis constantia comprobata est et sapientia melioratae rei publicae profectibus praedicatur.” See Timothy D. Barnes, “Valentinian, Auxentius and Ambrose,” *Hist.* 51, no. 2 (2002): 237.

Ambrose's dealings in Pannonia while Gratian and Valentinian II were residing there (in 376 and 378-379 AD) are well known.⁶⁷ In 376 AD he clashed with the mother empress Iustina on another sensitive matter: The episcopal succession at Sirmium. Whereas Iustina sympathised with an Arian candidate, Ambrose succeeded in installing the pro-Nicene Anemius. The rivalry between Ambrose and Iustina resurfaced in the affair of the Milanese church that prompted *Ep. extra coll.* 12. It may be that Ambrose had used similar tactics (and similar phrasing) in his encounters with imperial persons already at Sirmium, in 376 AD. The title could have then taken firm roots at Sirmium. As I noted in the second chapter, the region cultivated a fond memory of Valentinian I, which aligned itself well with Ambrose's meaning of "christianissimus imperator." If so, the redactor of the *Passio Pollionis* echoed a phrase already associated with the posthumous image of Valentinian I.⁶⁸

This discussion suggests a *terminus post quem* at the beginning of the 380's. The *Passio Pollionis* must have been written in the same milieu as the *Passio Irenaei*, given their close relationship.⁶⁹ Since Irenaeus' cult remained focused in Sirmium, and since the above discussion also points to Pannonia, the composition of the *Passio Pollionis* must be placed if not in Cibalae, at least at Sirmium.

The *terminus ante quem* is more difficult to establish, and it is based on conjectures rather than firm evidence. A first landmark is the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, which makes use of the *Passio Pollionis*. I shall analyse this text in chapter V. Relevant here is that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* dates probably from the early sixth century. The *Passio Pollionis* must have been written well before that time.

The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was composed in the region of Aquileia. There are no obvious connections to Pannonia discernible from the text. It follows that its redactor must have encountered the *Passio Pollionis* on Italian soil. One can hypothetically locate this exemplar in Ravenna, assuming that the *passio* travelled with Pollio's relics there. That the *passio* accompanied the relics seems likely, considering that in the north-eastern Italian regions traces of Pollio's combined cult and hagiography are concentrated in Ravenna. From Ravenna stems the only Italian manuscript containing the *Passio Pollionis* which predates the witnesses of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.⁷⁰ In light of all this, I tentatively establish the *terminus ante quem* of the *Passio Pollionis* to the beginning of the fifth century.

⁶⁷ Barnes, "Ambrose," 168-170. See also Maximinus (and Palladius), *Scholies Ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée*, ed. and trans. Roger Gryson, SC 267 (Paris: Cerf, 1980), 107-121.

⁶⁸ It is also possible that Ambrose encountered it at the court and chose to make the best of it in his dealings with the imperial heads. It is, however, curious that no other written source emerging from imperial circles mentions it (in particular, the panegyrics).

⁶⁹ See above, chapter II.2.2.

⁷⁰ Ravenna, Archivio Storico Arcivescovile, ms. without signature, f. 119va-120rb (twelfth century). See Tamas, "*Passio Pollionis*," 19-20.

2.2. Historical Reliability; Redactions

Because of its relative “sterility,” the *Passio Pollionis* was long held in esteem as a text reproducing authentic records or an eye-witness account edited from the proconsular acts.⁷¹ In other words, the historical reliability of the *Passio* was assessed through a redaction-critical analysis. Scholarly opinion, however, is not unanimous.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Albert Dufourcq claimed that the extant *passio* is the result of several subsequent redactional interventions, the latest of which were carried out in the fifth century, in Rome. Dufourcq credited the Roman redactor with the omission of Montanus’ wife, Maxima, from among the martyrs catalogued in the introduction; and with the insistence on a chaste life. The redactor’s interventions were motivated by the fact that clerical marriage had become an uncomfortable issue at the time.⁷² Dufourcq viewed such “retouches” as part of a larger project of adapting several hagiographic narratives from Illyricum.⁷³

Yet a closer comparison with Pannonian – in particular Sirmian – martyrological traditions reveals that the hagiographer of Pollio failed to mention not just Maxima, but other non-clerical martyrs as well. Notably, the “VII virgines” mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* on the 9th of April⁷⁴ and Syneros, one of the more important martyrs of Sirmium, are also absent from the list. Instead, the insistence on clergy emphasises Pollio’s “pedigree:” He is the latest in a long line of ecclesiastical predecessors in martyrdom, keepers of the true faith and way of life in whose footsteps Pollio declares to follow.⁷⁵ The redactor’s focus on clergy is not, therefore, accidental, but rather intentional. There is no reason to suppose these omissions were introduced by someone other than the original redactor.

Manlio Simonetti also challenged the presumed reliability of the *Passio Pollionis*.⁷⁶ He noted the apologetic undertones of Pollio’s confession, and a number of tropes and expressions which have almost exact parallels in other martyr-narratives.⁷⁷ From these observations Simonetti concluded that the *Passio Pollionis* is a mere patchwork of hagiographic commonplaces: “un aggregato di luoghi comuni, senza alcun particolare che abbia almeno il sentore dell’originalità, sì che non è proprio il caso di postulare l’esistenza di un documento antico ed attendibile che

⁷¹ Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les légendes hagiographiques*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1906), 136-7; Amore, “Pollio,” 592; Seeliger, “Pollio(n),” 397; Daniele, “Pollione,” 1002; Ruiz-Bueno, *Actas*, 1045; Caldarelli, *Atti*, 675 and 676n2; Jarak, “Martyres,” 277 (following Delehaye).

⁷² Dufourcq, *Etude*, 240-241.

⁷³ Dufourcq, *Etude*, 211-261 (“L’Hagiographie Pannonienne”). Zeiller, *Les origines*, 74n1, already remarked the forced character of Dufourcq’s thesis.

⁷⁴ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 9 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 41). See also Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 180.

⁷⁵ *Pass. Poll.* IV.4.

⁷⁶ Simonetti, *Studi*, 75-79.

⁷⁷ Many of the parallels identified by Simonetti are included in the apparatus below.

sarebbe utilizzato dal redattore del nostro testo.”⁷⁸ The scope of Simonetti’s observations can be enlarged through an attentive literary analysis.

The introduction and conclusion are written in a different style than the body of the text (the trial narrative): If the former are saturated with agonistic imagery, in Pollio’s dialogue with Probus apologetic language and method take precedence.⁷⁹ Moreover, there is a thematic affinity between the introduction and Pollio’s statements in the course of the trial. The *constantia* Pollio claims on behalf of Christians (III.4) is illustrated by Irenaeus, who died “pro fide et commissae sibi plebis constantia” (I.3). Steadfastness in the faith rewarded with eternal life (III.11) is illustrated by Demetrius and Eusebius: The former despised (“contemnentem”) the order to offer sacrifice and became “in aeternitate victurus” (I.4). The martyrdom of the latter is rewarded by “caelestis gloria” (V.2). Pollio’s appeal to his ecclesiastical predecessors (IV.4) parallels the catalogue of martyrs from the introduction (I.2-4), which includes only members of the local clergy.⁸⁰ The return to the topic of apostolic tradition (represented in the introduction by the martyred clergymen) lends a circular structure to the *Passio Pollionis*.

The trial section is structured in such a way as to transform Pollio’s presentation of Christian tenets in a climactic catechesis. The martyr’s statements are organized by topic and unfold progressively to encompass virtually all social stations. Pollio begins with doctrine (monotheism, renunciation of idols: III.6), then continues with an exhaustive series of ethical precepts (III.7-11), all of which he eventually grounds in apostolic tradition (IV.4). The ethical tenets proceed from addressing particular social categories (women, slaveholders and slaves, secular rulers) to more general precepts: Christian attitude towards the family, one’s immediate milieu, guests and the poor, and finally, the society at large.

This focus on outlining a distinctively Christian lifestyle rather than explaining / confessing the Christian doctrine is informed by the liturgical destination of the *passio*.⁸¹ The redactor was aware that he was writing for audiences celebrating Pollio’s *panegyris*, to which he alludes in V.2: “Cuius uenerabilem passionem (...) hodie cum gaudio celebrantes deprecemur diuinam potentiam ut nos eorum meritis participes esse dignetur.” He thus sought to impress the self-perception of the (immediate) Christian community at least at ethical level. We should view the *Passio Pollionis* as an intentionally composed text, with a homogeneous composition, in which the structure of the court hearing offered an ideal pretext to deliver

⁷⁸ Simonetti, *Studi*, 79.

⁷⁹ Notwithstanding, agonistic language is not entirely absent. Note, e.g., *Pass. Poll.* III.4: “deuoti et constantes ... qui mandata, quae legerint, etiam tormentis prohibentibus implere contendunt;” IV.3: “Qui sacrificat demoniis et non Deo, eradicabitur;” IV.4: “omnia quae inferre uolueris tota exultatione suscipio.”

⁸⁰ Respecting the liturgical order of the martyrs’ celebration, the *Passio* mentions first Montanus, presbyter in Singidunum; next, Irenaeus, bishop of Sirmium; and finally Demetrius, deacon in the same city. See *Pass. Poll.* I.2-4.

⁸¹ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78.

catechetical instruction. It contributed, thus, in a specific way to the formation of the local Christian identity.

In spite of this thematic and structural homogeneity, at least one aspect can be construed as a later interpolation: Pollio's function. *Primicerius lectorum* is attested as an ecclesiastical function starting with the sixth century only. It generally denotes the head of the *schola lectorum*, the instructor of the newly ordained readers.⁸² However, the task of readers and their "primicerius" as conceived by the *Passio Pollionis* consisted mainly of delivering catechesis, an archaic sphere of attributions. With "primicerius" the redactor could have simply pointed to the senior reader, or the head of the college (and not the instructor of the college of readers that sixth-century sources denote).

Ecclesiastical colleges (e.g., of *notarii*) headed by a *primicerius* are known from the middle of the fourth century.⁸³ Roughly around the same time (or at least during the later fourth century) one finds in larger ecclesiastical centres also colleges of *lectores*. These too must have been headed by *primicerii*, although sources do not name them formally. It is conceivable that a community the size of the Sirmian one had a college of readers led by a *primicerius*. That the title is not attested in written documents before the sixth century might simply be due to the fact that readers belonged to the minor clergy, with rather limited attributions.

Yet, in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, closest in time to the date proposed for the composition of the *Passio Pollionis*, Pollio is styled simply "lector." Furthermore, Hermogenes, the parallel of Pollio in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, is likewise presented as just reader, and not "primicerius lectorum." Hermogenes' clerical function is indicated in a block taken from the *Passio Pollionis*. Either "primicerius" did not feature in the model from which the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was copied, or its redactor chose to omit it. The *Hieronymianum* could have made a similar omission; however, when viewed on balance, late antique evidence weighs in favour of an interpolation. Should this be the case, it must have been introduced into the textual transmission of the *Passio Pollionis* sometime between the sixth century (date of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*) and the eleventh century, since all the extant witnesses of the *Passio Pollionis* contain it.

Finally, I turn to Eusebius of Cibalae, a martyr who, according to the *Passio Pollionis*, died in an earlier persecution. Does the *passio* reference here a historical person, or he is just a narrative character? Only one other late antique source

⁸² *ThesLL* 10/2.1-9: 1245, s.v. "primicerius." See also H. Leclercq, "Primicier," *DACL* 4/2 (1921): 1780-1781. The first hagiographic attestations of "primicerius lectorum" date from the same period. See, e.g., the sixth-century *Acta Materni* (ed. Cuperus, 361-370).

⁸³ See, e.g., the list of *lectores* ordained during the pontificate of Iulius (337-352 AD), in *Liber pontificalis* (ed. Duchesne and Vogel, 205). For the existence of colleges of *lectores*, see H. Leclercq, "Lecteur," *DACL* 8/2 (1929): 2243 and 2247.

mentions Eusebius of Cibalae: the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*.⁸⁴ Here Eusebius appears together with Pollio. Both the *passio* and the martyrology agree in having Eusebius martyred on the same day as Pollio. The *Hieronymianum* also indicates that he was a bishop. Unfortunately, we do not possess an episcopal list for Cibalae, whereas the *Hieronymianum* might have extracted Eusebius' name from the *Passio Pollionis* itself. Therefore, positing the existence of an Eusebius who served as bishop of Cibalae and lived in mid-fourth century remains a doubtful endeavour.⁸⁵

As Zeiller observed, the *Martyrologium Syriacum* and the Eastern synaxaries mention on the 28th of April the martyrdom of a priest from Nicomedia, also named Eusebius. Zeiller thought that one of the redactors of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* made the confusion between the priest in Nicomedia and the bishop in Cibalae. The editor of the *Passio Pollionis* took the reference to Eusebius from this confounded eulogy.⁸⁶ Simonetti's view on Eusebius complements Zeiller's observations. The Italian researcher believed that Eusebius was inserted in the *Passio Pollionis* as a hagiographic cliché intended to provide prodigious circumstances for Pollio's contest. Eusebius' character would simply be an attempt to relate Pollio's martyrdom with the death of one illustrious predecessor. If required, such predecessor could be invented. Eusebius' name found on the same date in an archaic version of the *Hieronymianum* offered the incentive to create this bishop of Cibalae.⁸⁷

However, the *Passio Pollionis* antedates the earliest known layers of the *Hieronymianum*. This in itself does not disqualify the theory above: The redactor of the *passio* could have worked from an earlier martyrology.⁸⁸ The confusion with Eusebius of Nicomedia might have been made at a more primitive stage and then transmitted both to the *passio* and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. Especially if said redactor was a zealous local who wanted to augment the prestige of the Christian community of Cibalae by emphasising its clerical pedigree and thereby setting it on a par with Sirmium. I already showed how embedded Eusebius' martyrdom is in the structure and the message of the *Passio Pollionis*.

The local setting in which the *Passio Pollionis* was used makes it difficult to believe the redactor "borrowed" Eusebius from an alien tradition. But this does not automatically mean he was a historical person. The reference to Eusebius should be read in light of the prestige and authority conferred to tradition, whose carriers are the representatives of the clergy. In all likelihood, Eusebius, bishop of Cibalae, never existed. To a hagiographic invention incline also the ambiguous references to the

⁸⁴ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 28 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 51); Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 215.

⁸⁵ Some scholars considered the reference authentic, placing Eusebius' martyrdom during the persecution under Valerian. See Ruiz-Bueno, *Actas*, 1045; Caldarelli, *Atti*, 675; Jarak, "The History," 169-170; Jarak, "Martyres," 278.

⁸⁶ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 49.

⁸⁷ See Simonetti, *Studi*, 78-79.

⁸⁸ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78.

chronological setting of Eusebius' martyrdom ("superiori persecutione"),⁸⁹ which contrast with introduction, where the list of martyred clergy is given with precision.⁹⁰ This again warns against attributing too much historical reliability to the *Passio Pollionis*.

2.3. Relationship with Other *Passiones*; The Issue of Original Language

The *Passio Pollionis* shares textual and narrative similarities with a number of *passiones* connected to Pannonia: the *Passio Irenaei Sirmiensis* (BHL 4466), the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* (BHL 2309), and the lost *Passio Montani*.

I treated the first set of parallels in the second chapter above.⁹¹ Here I address only the problem of the *passio's* original language in answer to some of Manlio Simonetti's remarks. Given the textual connections with the *Passio Irenaei*, Simonetti claimed that the *Passio Pollionis* too had originally been written in Greek, though such an original is no longer extant. His chief argument in this case concerned "regnantes" (I.1), which he deemed literally translated βασιλεύοντες.⁹² I presented Dolbeau's counterarguments in the second chapter.⁹³ From the texts which use "regnare" or its derivatives,⁹⁴ only the *Passio Irenaei* has an extant Greek version. For the rest we do not have any information related to a possible Greek version.

Had a Greek hagiography of Pollio existed, he would have certainly entered eastern martyrologies. Yet, as we have seen, the closest occurrence features an altered name (Puplion / Publios) and an invented tradition, suggesting that the *Passio Pollionis* was unknown in the East. In a province situated on the border of the Latin West and the Greek East, alternately annexed in late fourth century to both halves of the empire, it seems natural that one language influenced the other. The use of "regnare" instead of the Latin "imperare" must have been another characteristic of the compositional milieu in which the hagiographies of Irenaeus and Pollio were created. Accordingly, there is no reason to suppose a Greek *Passio Pollionis* ever existed – be it an original version or a Greek translation of the Latin.

Kovács noted that the editor of the *Passio Pollionis* must have known the *Passio Montani*. He summarized it in the introduction, just like the *Passio Irenaei*.⁹⁵ The

⁸⁹ *Pass. Poll.* II.2.

⁹⁰ Eusebius' name, a derivate of εὐσηβεῖα, can constitute another argument for considering this person a narrative fiction.

⁹¹ See chapter II.2.2 above.

⁹² Simonetti, *Studi*, 76: "Diocletianus et Maximianus regnantes: ricadiamo evidentemente nel caso già esaminato a proposito dell'espressione *praeceptis regalibus* contenuta negli Atti di Ireneo; quindi il termine *regnantes* non può essere considerato altro che traduzione del greco βασιλεύοντες; se ne deduce che anche questo testo latino deriva da un originale greco."

⁹³ See chapter II.2.1 above.

⁹⁴ *Pass. Iren.* 4.11: "praeceptis regalibus;" *Pass. Quir.* I.1: "suscitatis regum amicis;" *Pass. Quir.* VI.5: "regalium praeceptorum."

⁹⁵ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 78.

Passio Montani did not survive the ages, but the eulogy of Montanus in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* is thought to be its epitome:

ad 26 mart.: In Sirmia Montani presbiteri de Singidonis [qui] cum Sirmium fugisset comprehensus est et missus est in fluvium [ubi] nono lapide inventum est corpus eius; et Maximae uxoris eius.⁹⁶

The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, analyzed in chapter V, not only mentions Pollio by name, but follows the same narrative line and even quotes from the *Passio Pollionis*. I listed the most relevant correspondences in chapter V.2.2, where I also offer a more in-depth discussion.

2.4. Published Editions and Translations

The Bollandist Godefridus Henschenius published the *editio princeps* of the *Passio Pollionis* in 1675. After Thierry Ruinart reprinted it in his *Acta martyrum sincera*, the Bollandist edition became the *textus receptus*, cited and translated in modern collections of martyr-narratives. After my critical edition of the *Passio Pollionis* was published, Efthymios Rizos made use of the newly established text in his discussion on Pollio (Pullio) in the *Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity Database*. The *Passio Pollionis* was translated in Spanish, French, Italian, Hungarian, and partially in English (Rizos having cited and translated only parts of the *passio*):

Acta Passionis [S. Pollionis], ed. Godefridus Henschenius, *ActaSS Aprilis*, vol. 3 (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1866), 571-573.

Acta martyrum sincera et selecta, ed. Theodoricus Ruinart (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859), 435-436.

Acta Sanctorum Hungariae: ex Joannis Bollandi ejusque continuatorum operibus excerpta et prolegomenis ac notis illustrata, ed. Johannes Baptista Prileszky, vol. 2 (Tyrnaviae: n.p., 1743), 253-256.

Daniel Farlatus, *Illyrici Sacri tomus VII* (Venice: Apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1818), 577-578.

Hajnalka Tamas, "Passio Pollionis: Introduction, Critical Text, and Notes," *SE* 51 (2012): 27-31.

Actas de los mártires, ed. and trans. Daniel Ruiz-Bueno, BAC 75 (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1951), 1045-1050.

Atti dei martiri, trans. Giuliana Caldarelli, LCO 14, 2nd ed. (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 1985), 675-679.

Les martyrs de la Grande Persécution (304-311), trans. A. G. Hamman, *Les Pères dans la Foi* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979), 75-77.

Petrus Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae in aetate Tetrarcharum I (A.D. 285-305)*, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae VI* (Budapest: Pytheas, 2011), 74-77.

Efthymios Rizos, "Record E01095," *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01095> (accessed 22.03.2021).

⁹⁶ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 162-163.

The Latin text given here is from the critical edition published in Tamas, “*Passio Pollionis*.” The accompanying English translation is also my own. The similarities with Rizos’ translation for *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity Database* are coincidental.

Passio sancti Pullionis martyris

I. Diocletianus et Maximianus regnantes decreuerunt ut, immissa persecutione, omnes christianos aut delerent aut a fide facerent deuiare. 2. Quo tempore haec praeceptio cum uenisset ad Sirmiensem ciuitatem, Probus praeses imperatae sibi persecutionis a clericis sumpsit exordium; et comprehensum sanctum Montanum, 5 presbyterum ecclesiae Singidunensis diuque christianae fidei uiribus conluctantem, misit in fluuium. 3. Episcopum quoque Irenaeum Sirmiensis ecclesiae pro fide et commissae sibi plebis constantia fortiter dimicantem ad caelestem palmam simili sententia cognitor prouexit immitis. 4. Etiam sanctum Demetrium, eiusdem ecclesiae diaconum, renuntiantem idolis et impia praecepta contemnentem, uario tormentorum genere confectum temporali morti tradidit in aeternitate uicturum. 10

II. Sed, cum in his eius satiata crudelitas non fuisset, uicinas peragrandas esse credidit ciuitates. 2. Et cum sub specie publicae necessitatis ad urbem Cibalitanam peruenisset, de qua Valentinianus, christianissimus imperator, oriundus esse cognoscitur et in qua superiori persecutione Eusebius, eiusdem ecclesiae uenerandus 15 antistes, moriendo pro Christi nomine de morte et de diabolo noscitur triumphasse, 3. contigit Domini misericordia prouidente ut eodem die comprehensus Pullio, primicerius lectorum, fidei ardore notissimus, a ministris crudelitatis ipsius offerretur examini dicentibus: “Hic in tantam prorupit superbiam ut non cesset deos et principes blasphemare.”

20 III. Quo adstante, Probus praeses dixit: “Quis diceris?”

Respondit: “Pullio.”

Probus dixit: “Christianus es?”

Beatus Pullio respondit: “Christianus.”

2. Probus dixit: “Quod officium geris?”

25 Beatus Pullio respondit: “Primicerius lectorum.”

Probus dixit: “Quorum lectorum?”

Beatus Pullio respondit: “Qui eloquia diuina populis legere consueuerunt.”

3. Probus dixit: “Illi qui leues mulierculas uetant ne nubant ac peruertere et ad uanam castitatem suadere dicuntur?”

30 Beatus Pullio respondit: “Leuitatem et uanitatem nostram hodie poteris comprobare.”

6/7 pro – dimicantem: cf. *Pass. Iren.* 5.4-5 || 16/18 comprehensus ... offerretur: *Pass. Iren.* 2.1; *Pass. Iuli* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 260.3-4); *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 525) || 28/29 illi – suadere: cf. *Mart. Petri* 4-5 (ed. Vouaux, 416-422)

The Martyrdom of Saint Pullio, Martyr

During their reign, the emperors Diocletian and Maximian resolved that they should either wipe out all the Christians or force them to abandon the faith by unleashing a persecution. 2. As soon as this edict reached the city of Sirmium,⁹⁷ Probus, the governor, began the persecution ordered to him with the clergy. And, having arrested saint Montanus, a priest in the church of Singidunum, who struggled for a long time by the strength of the Christian faith, [Probus] cast him into the river. 3. Through a similar sentence, this judge⁹⁸ of cruelties also led to the celestial palm Irenaeus, the bishop of the church of Sirmium, who put up a strong contest for the faith and the steadfastness of the people entrusted to him. 4. He delivered to worldly death even saint Demetrius, the deacon of that same church, who rejected the idols and despised the impious edicts, consuming with various kinds of torments him who was to be victorious in eternity.

II. But, since his cruelty was not appeased with these, he decreed that the neighbouring cities ought to be searched as well. 2. And when, under the pretext of public necessity,⁹⁹ he arrived at the city of Cibalae, in which it is known that Valentinian, this most Christian emperor, was born, and in a previous persecution Eusebius, the venerable bishop of its church, triumphed over death and the devil by dying for the name of Christ; 3. on that same day the Lord's providential mercy arranged that Pullio, the chief of the readers, famous for the ardor of his faith, was arrested and the servants of cruelty presented him for [Probus'] inspection, saying: "This one breaks forth with such arrogance that he does not cease to blaspheme the gods and the emperors."

III. When [Pullio] stood before him, the governor Probus said: "What is your name?"

He answered: "Pullio."

Probus said: "Are you a Christian?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "Christian [I am]."

2. Probus said: "What duties do you have?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "I am the chief of the readers."

Probus said: "Of which readers?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "Of those who usually read the divine sayings to the people."

3. Probus said: "Those who prohibit feeble little women to marry and are said to corrupt them and urge them to observe a vain chastity?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "You may observe our feebleness and vanity today."

⁹⁷ "Quo tempore ... cum uenisset," literally "in the time when [the edict] arrived."

⁹⁸ Here and in III.12 "cognitor" signifies both the technical "judge" and "a person with knowledge," cf. *ThesLL* 3/7: 1487-1488, s.v. "cognitor." This strengthens Probus' portrait of an eager persecutor predisposed to cruelty, not just a magistrate who complies with imperial orders.

⁹⁹ "Publica necessitas:" public affairs, tasks related to provincial and local administration.

4. Probus dixit: "Quomodo?"

Beatus Pullio respondit: "Leues et uani illi sunt qui, relicto creatore suo, uestris superstitionibus acquiescunt. Ceterum deuoti et constantes probantur in fide regis aeterni, qui mandata quae legerint etiam tormentis prohibentibus implere contendunt."

5. Probus praeses dixit: "Quae mandata legendo uel cuius regis?"

Beatus Pullio respondit: "Christi regis pia et sancta mandata."

6. Probus dixit: "Quae?"

Beatus Pullio respondit: "Quae unum Deum *in caelis* indicant *intonantem*; quae non posse dici deos ligna et lapides salutifera admonitione testantur; 7. quae corrigunt noxios et emendant; quae innocentes in propositi sui perseuerantia et obseruatione corroborant; quae uirgines integritatis suae docent obtinere fastigia, coniuges pudicam in creandis filiis conscientiam custodire; 8. quae dominos seruis plus pietate quam furore persuadent unius conditionis contemplatione dominari; 9. quae seruos hortantur debitam fidem dominis plus amore quam timore persolvere; 10. quae docent regibus iusta praecipientibus oboedire, sublimioribus potestatibus bona obtemperare cum iusserint; 10. quae praecipiunt parentibus honorem, amicis uicem, inimicis ueniam, affectum ciuibus, hospitibus humanitatem, pauperibus misericordiam, caritatem cunctis, malum nemini <facere>; accipere illatas patienter iniurias, facere omnino nullas; 11. suis bonis cedere, aliena nec oculorum quidem delectatione concupiscere; in perpetuum esse uicturum qui pro fide Christi momentaneam mortem quam uos potestis inferre contempserit. 12. Haec si displicent, optime cognitor, tuo iudicio poteris derogare."

IV. Probus praeses dixit: "Et quid proderit si homo interfectus hac luce careat et bona corporis sui uniuersa deperdat?"

2. Beatus Pullio respondit: "Quia hac breui melior est illa lux perpetua et dulciora sunt quae permanent quam quae pereunt bona; nec est prudentia caducis postponere sempiterna."

9 intonantem: Ps 17:14; Ecclus 46:20; cf. 1 Sm 2:10; cf. 2 Sm 22:14 || **10** non – lapides: Dt 4:28, 28:36.64, 29:17; 2 Kgs 19:18; Is 37:19; Jer 2:27; Ez 20:32 || **12/13** uirgines – custodire: cf. 1 Cor 7 || **15** seruos – persolvere: cf. 1 Pt 2:18 || **16** regibus – oboedire: cf. Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tm 2:2; Ti 3:1; 1 Pt 2:13-17 || **26/27** hac – bona: cf. Jn 1:9 || dulciora – bona: cf. Ps 18:10-11

10 non – lapides: *Acta Marcelli* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 250.8-10); cf. Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.10 (ed. Bardy, 80); Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 22.12 (ed. Dekkers, 130.56), *De idololatria* 3.2-4 (ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, 1103.19-29); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23 (ed. Hurter, 68-69) || **16** regibus – oboedire: cf. Justin Martyr, *Apologia I* 17.1-3 (ed. Munier, 176.46-178.2); Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.11 (ed. Bardy, 85); Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5.24.1 (ed. Rousseau, Doutreleau, and Mercier, 294.3-298.22) || **21/22** in perpetuum – contempserit: cf. *Pass. Iren.* 4.12 || **26/27** hac – bona: cf. *Mart. Pionii* 5.4-5 (ed. Musurillo, 142.30-33) || **26** lux perpetua] cf. *Pass. Iuli* 2.6 (ed. Musurillo, 262.12)

4. Probus said: "In what way?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "Feeble and vain are those who, having abandoned their creator, assent to your superstitions. Yet the others prove to be devout and steadfast in the faith of the eternal king: Those who strive to fulfil the commandments they have read even in spite of the forbidding tortures."

5. The governor Probus said: "Which commandments are those to be read? And of which king?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "The pious and saintly commandments of Christ the king."

6. Probus said: "Which [are those]?"

The blessed Pullio answered: "Those which proclaim one God *thundering in heaven*; which witness to the salvific warning that wood and stone cannot be called gods; 7. which correct and emend the wrongdoers; which strengthen the innocents in the perseverance and observation of their conduct; which teach virgins to reach the fulfilment of their integrity, but wives to preserve a pure conscience when begetting sons; 8. which persuade masters to rule their servants by piety rather than rage, considering they are equal in their human condition; which urge servants to pay the loyalty owed to their master by love rather than fear; 9. which teach obedience to kings who rule with justice¹⁰⁰ and compliance in good deeds to higher authorities, as they had ordered; 10. which prescribe to pay honour to [one's] parents, reciprocation to friends, forgiveness to enemies, affection to citizen, hospitality to guests, mercy to the poor, charity to all, evil to none; to suffer offences with patience, but bring none whatsoever; 11. to share one's own goods, but look not upon other's [goods], not even for the delight of the eyes; which prescribe that whoever should despise for the sake of the faith in Christ the momentary death that you can inflict will be victorious in eternity. 12. If these do not please your judgment, O, most mighty judge, you may pronounce sentence against me."¹⁰¹

IV. The governor Probus said: "And what would it benefit if the person, dead, were deprived of this light and would lose all the goods of his body?"

2. The blessed Pullio answered: "Because that everlasting light is preferable to this short one, and the perennial goods are sweeter than those which perish. And it is not wise to set aside the eternal things in favour of some fleeting ones."

¹⁰⁰ "Iusta praecipientibus" signifies here "those kings who order just things."

¹⁰¹ "Derogare" is used in the technical sense of passing judgment against somebody. Cf. *ThesLL* 5/1: 639, s.v. "derogare, 2."

3. Probus dixit: "Quid ista? Fac quod iusserunt imperatores."

Beatus Pullio respondit: "Quid?"

Probus dixit: "Vt sacrifices."

5 Beatus Pullio respondit: "Ego hoc non sum factururus, quia scriptum est: *Qui sacrificat demoniis et non Deo, eradicabitur.*"

4. Probus dixit: "Gladio ferieris si non sacrificaueris."

10 Beatus Pullio respondit: "Fac quod tibi praeceptum est. Me autem oportet episcoporum, presbyterorum et omnium patrum quorum doctrinis imbutus sum sequi tota ueritate uestigia. Vnde et omnia quae inferre uolueris tota exultatione suscipio."

5. Probus praeses, data sententia, flammis eum iussit exuri.

15 **V.** Mox quoque raptus a ministris diaboli et ductus quasi miliario longe a ciuitate, agonem suum laudans et benedicens et glorificans Deum impleuit martyrium intrepidus. 2. Cuius uenerabilem passionem, sed et sancti episcopi eiusdem ciuitatis Eusebii qui ante plurimos annos eodem die uitam martyrii caelestem promouit ad gloriam, hodie cum gaudio celebrantes deprecemur diuinam potentiam ut nos eorum meritis participes esse dignetur. 3. Haec autem acta sunt in ciuitate Cibalitana die quinto kalendarum maiarum, sub Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus, regnante Domino nostro Iesu Christo cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum, amen.

4/5 Ex 22:20 cum Dt 32:17 || 13 benedicens et glorificans: cf. Dn 3:51; Lk 2:20

4/5 qui – eradicabitur: *Pass. Iren.* 2.1; *Pass. Quir.* III.3; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); *Pass. Phileae* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 344.13-14) || 7 fac – est: *Pass. Iren.* 4.8; *Pass. Petri Balsami* 1 (ed. Ruinart, 526); cf. *Pass. Quir.* II.6; cf. *Acta Cypriani* 3.5 (ed. Musurillo, 172.12-13); cf. *Ep. Phileae* 9 (ed. Musurillo, 322.34-36) || 12 a ministris diaboli: *Pass. Sereni* 5.1; *Pass. Iuli* 4.5 (ed. Musurillo, 264.19), *Mart. Carpi* 4.2 (ed. Musurillo, 32.17)

3. Probus said: "What is this? Do what the emperors ordered."

The blessed Pullio answered: "What?"

Probus said: "That you offer sacrifice."

The blessed Pullio answered: "I am not going to do that, for it is written: *Who sacrifices to the demons and not to God, shall be utterly destroyed.*"

4. Probus said: "You will be slain by sword if you do not offer sacrifice."

The blessed Pullio answered: "Do what you have been ordered to do. As for me, I ought to follow in all truth the footsteps of bishops, priests, and all the fathers with whose doctrines I am imbued. Hence I [shall] receive with total exaltation all you would want to inflict on me."

5. Then the governor Probus pronounced the sentence and ordered that [Pullio] be burnt alive.

V. Immediately seized by the servants of the devil and brought about one mile outside the city, he completed his martyrdom without tremor, praising his contest, and blessing and glorifying God. 2. Today, celebrating with joy his venerable passion, but also that of the holy bishop of the same city, Eusebius, who on this very day many years before, exchanged his life for the heavenly glory of martyrdom, let us implore the divine power that we might be deemed worthy of sharing in their merits. 3. Now all these happened in the city of Cibalae, on the fifth day before the calends of May, under the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, in the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom worship and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

3. PASSIO POLLIONIS: A LITERARY AND AUDIENCE-ORIENTED ANALYSIS¹⁰²

3.1. The Use of Scripture in the *Passio Pollionis*

The clerical vocation of *lector* was focused on intimate knowledge of the Scriptures. Accordingly, one would expect Pollio's dialogue with the governor to be interspersed with biblical passages illustrating the martyr's belief in the one God. Pollio himself declares that his duties consisted of reading the divine sayings ("primicerius lectorum... qui eloquia divina populis legere consueverunt."¹⁰³) And indeed, his entire exposition of the Christian faith is imbued with scriptural allusions, although direct citations rarely occur. In this the *Passio Pollionis* follows the arguments and the methods apologists of earlier centuries used to address non-Christians.¹⁰⁴

The apologetic outlook is striking. Pollio's obvious focus on Christian ethos forces doctrinal aspects to the background. Instead, the overwhelming proportion of Pollio's retorts consists of normative statements describing the behaviour expected of Christians belonging to different social classes. Scriptural parallels stem especially from the Pauline and Petrine epistles.¹⁰⁵ Yet many of Pollio's utterances are clad in apologetic formulae rather than direct citations of the Scriptural text.

Interestingly, the two clearly delineated citations adduced by Pollio refer to what one should believe (the doctrinal aspect). The first is a vetero-testamentary epithet of God: "unum Deum in caelo intonantem."¹⁰⁶ However, the same apologetic finality governs the use of this epithet. Although "intonantem" is used as a scriptural term, it also recalls a title of the pagan god Jupiter, "Iupiter tonans." The citation thus communicates monotheism in terms familiar to a non-Christian or a recently converted audience: Pollio here demonstrates mastery of the apologetic method.

¹⁰² The general lines of this analysis have been presented in Tamas, "*Eloquia diuina*," 189-198. Here I offer a more insightful and nuanced view.

¹⁰³ *Pass. Poll.* III.2. The past tense, "consueverunt," is curious here. Two interpretations are possible. The edict of 303 AD ordered the confiscation of sacred books, creating *de facto* disruptions in liturgy and the role readers played in it. At the moment of Pollio's trial, readers would no longer have sacred books from which to read the divine sayings. The second interpretation is more subtle: Towards the end of the fourth century, we assist to a change in readers' sphere of duties and recruitment. Now recruited from very young age, *lectores* were entrusted rather with chanting the psalms, whereas reading from Scripture became the responsibility of deacons. Readers were trained in special schools under a teacher who, in time, was given the title *primicerius lectorum*. The past tense in Pollio's statement could denote in this case the awareness of the redactor – and implicitly of his audience – that a change in liturgical duties was taking place.

¹⁰⁴ As Simonetti, *Studi*, 73, already observed.

¹⁰⁵ The *Passio Irenaei* is likewise suffused with allusions to the Pauline epistles. See above, chapter II.2.3 and II.3.1, and especially the observations of Benveniste. The Pauline corpus seems to have enjoyed a privileged place in the milieu where the *Passio Pollionis* and the *Passio Irenaei* were born.

¹⁰⁶ *Pass. Poll.* III.6.

The second Scriptural citation, “*sacrificans daemoniis eradicabitur*,”¹⁰⁷ carries the same apologetic spirit. Being the preferred justification of many martyrs for their refusal to perform the requested sacrifice,¹⁰⁸ it can be counted as a hagiographic trope. As argued above, the redactor found the two Old Testament passages combined here (Ex 22:20 and Dt 32:17) in the *Passio Irenaei*.¹⁰⁹ In addition to these two references, an allusion to Jn 1:9 may be retraced in Pollio’s reply: “*Quia hac brevi melior est lux illa perpetua, et dulciora sunt quae permanent quam quae pereunt bona*.”¹¹⁰ Again, this is phrased rather as a philosophical assertion that educated pagans would find entirely acceptable. The immediately following “*nec est prudentiae caducis postponere sempiterna*” further emphasises this connection with the Roman system of values. All these citations have been carefully chosen and adapted to suit an apologetic message: That the basic tenets of Christianity, although neatly superior to the Roman *mos maiorum*, are nevertheless compatible with it; and that, because of this, there is no reason why Christianity should not be accepted.

Pollio’s normative description of the Christian ethos, though biblically inspired, is not based on citations, but rather condenses ethical reflections expressed in various places in the New Testament. These ethical tropes have many parallels in apologetic works. The *Passio Pollionis* draws them together in a concise synthesis of orthodoxy and orthopraxis well embedded in its compositional context. Two aspects deserve further attention.

At the peak of a climactic exposition, Pollio states that the “*eloquia diuina*” teach: “*suis bonis cedere, aliena nec oculorum quidem delectatione concupiscere*.”¹¹¹ The passage interestingly blends the commandment to share one’s goods (as a consequence of the commandment to love one’s neighbour) and the tenth commandment in the Decalogue. The statement forms the summit of genuine Christian behaviour, as viewed by Pollio – or, rather, Pollio’s hagiographer. The love of one’s neighbour comprises both positive and negative aspects: Positive in mercy, in the suffering of injustice, in sharing one’s goods; negative in prohibiting evil, injustice and cupidity. The passage concludes a series of antitheses which define Christian social ethos as the Church envisaged it in the first three centuries of its existence.

Pollio’s replies to the governor denote an apologetic reading of Scriptures. In certain places, however, this is taken a step further. For instance, when explaining the right attitude towards secular rule, Pollio specifies that only the just rulers ought to be obeyed.¹¹² This offers a variation on the theme of obedience to secular authorities. Several times the New Testament commends obedience to earthly rulers in

¹⁰⁷ *Pass. Poll.* IV.3.

¹⁰⁸ For references, see the apparatus at *Pass. Poll.* IV.3.

¹⁰⁹ *Pass. Iren.* 2.1.

¹¹⁰ *Pass. Poll.* IV.2.

¹¹¹ *Pass. Poll.* III.11.

¹¹² *Pass. Poll.* III.9.

everything except when it clashes with obedience to God.¹¹³ The apologists turned this view around, stating that in religious matters a person could disobey the emperor: This was why Christians refused to offer sacrifice to pagan deities or the emperor's *genius*.¹¹⁴ For the apologists, it served as an exoneration of their refusal to participate in pagan devotion and / or the imperial cult. At the same time, they pleaded for a more benevolent attitude towards Christians, by contradicting the obvious charge: That in their inobedience they betrayed emperor and state alike. The apologists argued that, although the true faith made it impossible for them to offer sacrifice to the emperor's *genius*, Christians obeyed him in every other respect.¹¹⁵ The *Passio Pollionis*, however, qualifies this claim: Christians owed obedience only to just and pious rulers. What lesson was its audience to learn from this "divine saying?"

The text implies – if only on a hypothetical level – the possibility that kings may not always be just in their rule. Such moderate perception on imperial authority, befitting the imperial dynamics in the late fourth century, is far from Eusebius' idealized view of the Christian emperor. It rather agrees with the conceptions on secular rule expressed by Athanasius and Ambrose.¹¹⁶ The emperor should constantly work so that he might be truly a Christian ruler. At the other end of the social scale, the common Christian should not be accomplice to the sin that results from an unjust rule. Pollio's exhortation, that Christians should obey only those who rule justly, results from a more complex ethical reflection. Whereas Scripture and the apologists did not distinguish between "just" and "unjust" commandments *per se*, the *Passio Pollionis* calls for discernment in obedience.

This view is well illustrated by the antithesis between the "christianissimus imperator" Valentinian I and the "cognitor immitis," Probus.

3.2. Valentinian vs. Probus: The Antithesis

The two characters are the only laypersons mentioned in the *Passio Pollionis*, which otherwise focuses on clergy. Thus, Probus and Valentinian are opposed on equal grounds in the imaginative universe of the *passio*. In chapter II Valentinian appears as the representative of Christian generations succeeding Pollio. Whereas bishop Eusebius was his illustrious ecclesiastical predecessor, Valentinian is his equally illustrious lay successor. The latter is portrayed as the embodiment of the Christian *modus vivendi* that Pollio proclaims in the *Passio*. In him culminates the example of both martyrs from Cibalae, Eusebius and Pollio. That Valentinian should be held in such high regard as to attribute him the title "christianissimus imperator"

¹¹³ Cf., e.g., Rom 13:1-7; 1 Tm 2:1-2; Ti 3:1; 1 Pt 2:13-17.

¹¹⁴ The best illustration is Justin Martyr, *Apologia* 1 17.1-3 (ed. Munier, 176.46-178.2).

¹¹⁵ See also Theophilus, *Ad Autolyicum* 1.11 (ed. Bardy, 85); Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5.24.1 (ed. Rousseau, Doutreleau, and Mercier, 294.3-298.22).

¹¹⁶ Setton, *Christian Attitude*, 78-108 (Athanasius and his supporters); 109-152 (Ambrose).

only serves to highlight that he was perceived by the redactor and probably also by his target-audience as a just ruler indeed.

I already noted the effects of Valentinian's regime in Pannonia: The burden set by his fiscal policy, the prolongation of the Arian crisis, but also his attempts to safeguard the province when threatened by barbarians, in contrast with the actions of the local administration.¹¹⁷ In Pannonian collective memory, thus, Valentinian would still be considered as "their" emperor. All their complaints would be directed against the local officials, especially the head of the administration, Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus.

This situation is reflected in the *Passio Pollionis* by the peculiar *damnatio memoriae* of Probus.¹¹⁸ Here the byplay of "cognitor" adds further substance to Probus' savagery in carrying out the persecution. The term is used twice to characterize Probus. Firstly, in the description of Irenaeus' martyrdom, the persecutor is "cognitor ... inimitis."¹¹⁹ Secondly, at the end of his long exposé on Christian ethos, Pollio addresses Probus as "optime cognitor."¹²⁰ Two meanings are combined here, "knower" and the more technical sense of "judge." Both were usual in Late Antiquity. Thus, Probus is presented as an exercised master of cruelties, whose position as a judicial officeholder provides optimal occasions to carry out his cruel inclinations. Moreover, "cognitor" in the more general sense of a knowledgeable person indicates that Pollio expected Probus to be an informed individual, an educated pagan who should have realised Pollio's description of the Christian tenets was entirely acceptable. This is in flagrant contrast with Probus' subsequent actions.

3.3. Martyrdom and Apologetics: The Functions of Pollio's Confession

As noted earlier, the propensity to appeal to apologetics is visible both in the dogmatic and in the ethical section of Pollio's confession, both in terms of content and method. In this section I discuss how the *Passio Pollionis* interweaves apologetics and the theology of martyrdom.

One of the favourite methods of apologetic argumentation is to retort the accusations brought against Christians by exonerating them and demonstrating that in reality pagans themselves were guilty of these charges. Pollio too resorts to this strategy: When Probus accuses Christians of "leuitas" and "uanitas,"¹²¹ he endeavours to refute this accusation by showing the constancy of Christians. Pagans are "leues et uani," whereas Christians prove "deuoti et constantes," in a chiasmic structure that emphasises the contrast.¹²²

¹¹⁷ See above, chapter II.2.2.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Rizos, "Record E01095" (accessed on 22.03.2021).

¹¹⁹ *Pass. Poll.* I.3.

¹²⁰ *Pass. Poll.* III.12.

¹²¹ *Pass. Poll.* III.3.

¹²² Cf. Tamas, "*Passio Pollionis*," 32.

When asked which are the sayings he is reading to the people, Pollio enumerates them focusing initially on monotheism: “Quae unum Deum in caelis indicant intonantem; quae non posse dici deos ligna et lapides salutifera admonitione testantur.”¹²³ The topic of pagan gods being merely stone and wood characterises apologetic literature.¹²⁴ The two tenets invoked by Pollio express the basic creedal changes implicit in the act of conversion. Christian identity, however, is not reduced to them. Despite their centrality in martyrs’ refusal to offer sacrifice, these doctrinal considerations do not generate further comment in the *passio*.

Elsewhere Pollio refers to God as creator, and to Christ as king (but without dwelling on Christ’s divinity). Pollio’s hagiographer was perhaps avoiding troublesome dogmatic issues still under debate with the Arian party. But, more importantly, his focus rested not on what a Christian was supposed to believe. Instead, his attention was captured by the everyday manifestation of this faith, by a distinctly and visibly Christian way of life. Apologetic literature placed the accent on demonstrating that pagan gods were mere wood and stone animated by demons. Christian conduct was introduced as an additional beneficial aspect. The *Passio Pollionis*, in contrast, stresses precisely this conduct, while the creedal content is treated almost as taken for granted. The message is that Pollio suffered martyrdom not just for the belief in one God, but also for the behavioural ideals inherent to that belief.

Steadfastness and constancy in the faith are measured according to one’s compliance with these ideals: “deuoti et constantes probantur in fide regis aeterni, qui mandata quae legerint etiam tormentis prohibentibus implere contendunt” (then follows the lengthy exposition of Christian tenets).¹²⁵ The guidelines set by Pollio function also as a catechetical lesson for new converts, explaining what Christians ought to do and how they ought to behave, giving to all the authority of a commandment issued by Christ himself.¹²⁶

In this sense, the absence of traditional hagiographic structures receives a new meaning. We do not hear Pollio’s prayers;¹²⁷ we do not witness any miracles, any scenes of torture or attempts to bribe the saint with religious or secular offices. The redactor of the *Passio* was not interested in the short moments before the martyr’s death, but in the life that culminated with his martyrdom. A different kind of sacrifice

¹²³ *Pass. Poll.* III.6.

¹²⁴ Cf., e.g. Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* 1.10 (ed. Bardy, 80); Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 22.12 (ed. Dekkers, 130.56), *De idololatria* 3 (ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, 1103.19-29); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23 (ed. Hurter, 68-69).

¹²⁵ *Pass. Poll.* III.4.

¹²⁶ All the statements pronounced by Pollio are brought together under the heading “Christi regis pia et sancta mandata” (*Pass. Poll.* III.5).

¹²⁷ In the conclusion, the redactor notes: “[Pollio] agonem suum laudans, et benedicens et glorificans Deum implevit martyrium intrepidus” (*Pass. Poll.* V.1). This is the closest indication of a prayer pronounced by Pollio. The hagiographer wanted to maintain the focus on Pollio’s dialogue with Probus, conceived as a legacy that the martyr leaves behind.

for Christ's sake, yet one which should be desired and performed by all who call themselves Christian. That its parameters are pronounced by a martyr, a hero of the past, a favourite of God in heavens, who has conformed to them and therefore received eternal life only gives them prestige and authority, as well as a guarantee of success. This is the way in which salvation is earned.

The reflections on constancy in faith enclose Pollio's confession in a circular structure. If Pollio began with a comment on constancy, he concluded with another comment on its rewards: eternal life (signified by "lux perpetua") and perennial goods ("quae permanent ... bona").¹²⁸ Persistence in faith in the most extreme circumstances is the path to salvation. This trope is omnipresent in hagiographic literature: Though leading to temporal death, steadfastness achieves eternal life for the martyr. Pollio's path to martyrdom does not begin with his public recognition of being a Christian. With his confession he assumes a Christian identity that exceeds common expectation. What counts is not so much Pollio's fearlessness in front of death, but his adherence – both theoretical and practical – to the Christian moral code. His warning, "nec est prudentia caducis postponere sempiterna"¹²⁹ calls for a rigorous observation of this code. Thus, the confession which triggers martyrdom is the public confirmation of an identity visibly moulded by the faith in Christ. The commandments Pollio summarizes are not mere words read by him on occasion, but represent a veritable *forma vitae* that he strives to keep, no matter the consequences. Pollio's martyrdom is the culmination of a perpetual witnessing of Christ. It begins with believing in the one true God and becomes manifest in social behaviour.

This explains also why the *Passio Pollionis* does not employ *imitatio Christi* vocabulary.¹³⁰ The martyr embodies in speech and deed the perfect Christian, and it is he who should be imitated by the audience.¹³¹ Since he remained constant in faith in spite of temporal death, the audience is to understand that, just as promised in his declarations to Probus, he obtained the eternal reward. Thus, to Christians contemporary with the redactor of the *passio*, but also to later generations, Pollio represents an accessible and achievable example, as an ordinary human person who successfully carried out Christ's commandments.¹³² Through him, the audience is urged to witness Christ by never letting the small things have priority over the eternal ones, just as he once did – with all the ensuing effects at the level of belief and lifestyle. They are expected to reach the standards set by the martyr in his speech.

¹²⁸ *Pass. Poll.* IV.2: "hac brevi melior est lux illa perpetua, et dulciora sunt quae permanent quam quae pereunt bona."

¹²⁹ *Pass. Poll.* IV.2.

¹³⁰ In contrast to the *Passio Irenaei*. See, e.g., *Pass. Iren.* 2.3: "Gaudeo si feceris ut Domini mei passionibus particeps inveniar."

¹³¹ Cf. the redactor's words in the epilogue: "Cuius uenerabilem passionem sed et sancti episcopi eiusdem ciuitatis Eusebii ... hodie cum gaudio celebrantes, deprecemur diuinam potentiam, ut nos eorum [i.e., Pollionis et Eusebii] meritis participes esse concedere dignetur" (*Pass. Poll.* V.2).

¹³² This made him, of course, an imitator of Christ. Although the text does not explicitate, its late antique hearers must have understood it from Pollio's portrait.

In conclusion, this hagiography was not conceived as just a record of past events, but it appealed to the sensibilities and inner worlds of those who read it or heard it during liturgy. The period in which it was composed was characterised by mass-conversions, as more and more people converted to Christianity out of interest. By then several emperors had been Christian. Although only Gratian showed a slight preference to employ Christians in authoritative positions, it was clear that political careers and social welfare depended more and more on adherence to the imperial credo. That, however, did not necessarily trigger a genuine conversion. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine – just to name a few – constantly militated against the loose moral standards of their fellow Christians. In parallel, paganism presented once again a problem in the central dioceses of the Western Empire.¹³³ In such circumstances, a revival of apologetic arguments, appealing by nature to the common sense of their addressees, supported a missionary and propagandistic agenda, while also educating mass-converts and initiating them in the Christian way of living. The guidelines encased in the *Passio Pollionis* imply a complex functionality derived from their apologetic grounding: propaganda, catechesis, and identity-formative. Ultimately, Pollio's hagiography conveys the message that belief in one God and the renunciation of idols are not enough; that being a Christian in name alone is not Christian at all. In fact, followers of Christ showcase their faith in their relationships with others.

3.4. The Accusations Brought against Pollio: The Issue of Virginity

In Probus' view, Christian readers "leues mulierculas uetant, ne nubant, ac peruertere et ad uanam castitatem suadere dicuntur."¹³⁴ From among the many accusations brought against Christians, Probus here singles out the exhortation to asceticism, in particular, female asceticism.

Apologists did not face this accusation,¹³⁵ but it did form the subject of a common enough debate in Late Antiquity. The *Passio Pollionis* may have encountered the topic in the apocryphal acts of Peter. However, the controversy around asceticism was by the later fourth century sufficiently important to prompt a reaction.¹³⁶ Probus' disparaging remark echoes the accusations brought against Jerome in the 380s AD.¹³⁷ Jerome had mentored the ascetic endeavours of several aristocratic

¹³³ In 384 AD, Quintus Aurelius Symmachus estimated the imperial climate safe enough to petition Valentinian II for the restoration of the Victoria altar. The petition was vehemently rebuked by Ambrose, starting with the very *Ep.* 12.

¹³⁴ *Pass. Poll.* III.3.

¹³⁵ The apologists had, indeed, to explain the obvious phenomenon that Christianity first spread among women and slaves, considered the "naïve" classes. New here is the method by which Probus wants Christians to have attracted female converts: The preaching of a strict asceticism.

¹³⁶ On this topic see, i.a., Clark, "Theory and Practice," 25-46; David G. Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine," *ChH* 69, no. 2 (June 2000): 281-303.

¹³⁷ Cf. John N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 108.

women in Rome. He was held responsible for their apparently extreme ascetic regime.

In response to this accusation, Pollio himself adopts a more positive attitude towards marriage, when he urges “uirgines integritatis suae... obtinere fastigia, coniuges pudicam in creandis filiis conscientiam custodire.”¹³⁸ Pollio’s more balanced view sounds as a defence and a veiled advertisement: It is not true that Christianity prohibits marriage and procreation. Instead, it seeks to correct women’s conduct both in marriage and asceticism.

The appropriate behaviour of Christian women was certainly an important issue in late fourth century Pannonia. Another hagiographic text, the *Passio Sereni*, approaches the topic in similar terms.¹³⁹ Are we to conclude from here that there was a problem with the morality of women? Or, rather, that the text reflects a growing awareness of ascetic spirituality characteristic for the late fourth century?

Nagy glimpsed an ascetic agenda behind this accusation and Pollio’s response.¹⁴⁰ He compared Pollio’s insistence on *integritas* with the role this ascetic virtue takes in Ambrose of Milan’s writings on asceticism. Nagy concluded that the redactor must have been familiar with the Ambrosian ascetic discourse, which he sought to foster in his target-audience. The redactor’s ascetic inclinations transpire also from the omission of Maxima from the introductory catalogue of martyrs.¹⁴¹ In his demonstration, Nagy took at face value another Pannonian hagiography, the *Passio Sereni*. In the *textus receptus* accessible to Nagy at the time, the protagonist of this *passio*, Syneros, is styled “monachus.” The clear ascetic reference seemed to strengthen Nagy’s theory. However, as I demonstrated elsewhere and as I shall show in the next chapter, “monachus” is a late interpolation. The *Passio Sereni* has a great deal to “teach” on the proper conduct of Christian women, but not necessarily in the way Nagy reasoned.

For now, let us note that asceticism in late fourth century Pannonia is attested by other sources.¹⁴² The *Passio Pollionis* is far from censuring it, despite the strong societal dimension in Pollio’s exposé. Rather, it takes inspiration from 1 Cor 7, and presents asceticism and marriage as equally valuable options. I maintain the opinion that the *Passio Pollionis* does not defend the superiority of asceticism and virginity over marriage. The Roman upholding of marriage and procreation had its role in this cautious discourse. Pursuing the same apologetic goal, the redactor aims to show that Christianity defends ideals considered essential in pagan mentality. But it also brings a sharper – more befitting – ethical awareness to the topic of marriage. What it demands from people engaged in both conducts is constancy and a continent attitude – in accordance with the spirit of the times.

¹³⁸ *Pass. Poll.* III.7.

¹³⁹ See below, chapter IV.3.1.

¹⁴⁰ Nagy, “Ascetic Christianity,” 101-103.

¹⁴¹ I spoke of the omission of Maxima in section 2.2 of this chapter.

¹⁴² E.g., Paulinus of Milan, *Vita Ambrosii* 11 (ed. Pellegrino, 65).

CHAPTER IV

Syneros (Serenus) of Sirmium (BHL 7595-7596)

1. HAGIOGRAPHIC DOSSIER

Next to Irenaeus, the cult of another martyr from Sirmium is remarkably well attested: That of Syneros, whom scholarship knew until recently as Serenus. Our knowledge regarding the late antique cult of Syneros has been considerably augmented by the systematic archaeological excavations conducted on the site of ancient Sirmium. These unearthed the remains of a cemeterial basilica and inscriptions *ad martyres*. Corroborated, the archaeological finds, late antique martyrologies, and the *Passio Sereni* offer a difficult to reconcile dossier.

I discussed at length this dossier and its challenges in an article published in the 2020 issue of the journal *Sacris Erudiri*.¹ However, keeping in line with the structure set in the chapters of this book, I offer below a concise summary of that discussion, followed by the critical text I established and its accompanying English translation.

1.1. Archaeological and Epigraphic Sources

The cult of Syneros is attested in the second half of the fourth century in the northern cemetery of ancient Sirmium, near today's Majurska Bara (archaeological loc. 26). Two inscriptions *ad martyrem* (*CIL* 3.10232 and *CIL* 3.10233) authenticate the remains of a cemeterial edifice dedicated to the memory of Syneros:²

CIL 3.10232: [Ego Aurel]ia Amin[ia] [posui ti]tulum uiro me[o / Fl(aui)o Sancto ex
n(umero) lou(ianorum) pr(o)tec(tori) / benemeritus qui uixit / ann(is)
pl(us) m(inus) L qui est defunc(tus) ciuit(ate) Aquileia. Titulum / posuit ad
beatu! Syneroti! ma(r)ture et infane! filiam / suam nomine Ursicina / qui
uixit annis n(umero) III.³

¹ Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 83-115.

² See Petar Milošević, "Earlier Archaeological Activity in Sirmium," in *Sirmium: Archaeological Investigations in Syrmian Pannonia*, ed. Vladislav Popović, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Arheološki Institut, 1971), 4; Popović, "A Survey," 122-123; Duval, "Sirmium," 82-83; Јеремић, "Култне," 49-55. Topographic plans in Jeremić, "Adolf Hytrek," 119, 121-122, 125; Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 70. On the two epitaphs, see Mirković, "Hrišćanske nekropole," 63-64 (no. 1 and 2, with images); Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 205 (no. 201 and 202). The proposal of Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 161, to include *CIL* 3.14340² in the corpus of inscriptions attesting the cult of Syneros is unfounded: The few visible letters on this inscription make any interpretation hazardous.

³ The reading proposed in Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 85, based on the image published in Mirković, "Hrišćanske nekropole," 64. Mirković reads: "[Ego Aur]elia Aminia po[ssui] titulum viro meo[is]".

CIL 3.10233: *Ego Artemidora fe/ci uiua me memori/am ad domnum / Synerotem inte/rantem ad dexte/ram inter Fortuna/tanem et Disiderium.*

The inscriptions, very well preserved, were dated to the second half of the fourth century based on comparative palaeographic analysis and iconographic style.⁴ They were discovered in the vicinity of the remains of a monumental architectural structure similar to a church foundation. Near its hypothetical entrance archaeologists unearthed also the remains of three tombs, their topographic distribution matching the indications on Artemidora's epitaph (*CIL* 3.10233).⁵ The exact nature of this edifice, a rectangular building with collonades, a single nave and apse, is difficult to establish.⁶ It should probably be envisaged as a cemeterial chapel or as a *martyrium*, since *CIL* 3.10232 and *CIL* 3.10233 clearly state that the relics of the martyr were deposited in this foundation.⁷ It stood at the centre of a spacious Christian burial site that developed on the eastern periphery of a previously pagan necropolis.⁸ It was in use up to the fifth century inclusive.⁹

Beyond attesting Syneros' cult at Sirmium, the two inscriptions are also instrumental in reconstructing the martyr's name. In the majority of the martyrologies as well as the manuscripts that transmit the *Passio Sereni*, the martyr's name appears phonetically altered to various degrees. The Genitives present in *CIL* 3.10232 and *CIL* 3.10233 suggest the form *Syneros as the authentic name. The variants present in other sources resulted from subsequent phonetic mutations.¹⁰

1.2. Late Antique Martyrological Sources

In Late Antiquity, Syneros was commemorated both in Western and Eastern martyrological traditions. His name was inscribed in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, the fifth century Syriac martyrology and its lost Greek model, and even in the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*.

[F]l(avio) Sancto ex n(umero) Iov(ianorum) pr(o)tec(tori) benemeritus qui vixit | ann(is) pl(us) m(inus) L qui est defunc-/tus civit(ate) Aquileia. Titulum | posuit ad beatu Syneroti ma/rture et infane (!) filiam suam nomine Ursicina | qui vixit annis n(umero) III;" Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 68n201, proposed to read the second part "... titulum/ posuit ad beatu(m) Syneroti(m) ma/rture(m) et infante(m) filiam/ suam..."

⁴ Palaeographic criteria (letter shapes, ductus) showed that a substantial part of inscriptions were homogeneous, enabling scholars to retrieve a relative chronology starting from dated inscriptions. Christograms occasionally surrounded by α and ω, decorative leaves, and palm branches are common decorations on Pannonian inscriptions of the time. See Milena Milin, "Three Comments on Late Antiquity History," *Balkanica* 34 (2003): 65; Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 128-129.

⁵ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 160.

⁶ Since only the western sections were excavated, reconstructions placed the apse alternately to the West (Hytrek) and the East (Jeremić). Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 71 (with n211) remains skeptical as to the outlook and precise character of this *memoria martyris*.

⁷ On the distribution of tombs *ad martyres* around cemeterial buildings dedicated to martyrs (churches, chapels or other *martyria*), see Duval, *Auprès des saints*, 52-55.

⁸ Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 44 and 128.

⁹ Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 204-205.

¹⁰ For other scholarly reconstructions, see Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 91.

The two notes in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* connected to Syneros denote several corruptions. The more archaic layer places Syneros' martyrdom on the 23rd of February, in two distinct places (Sirmium in Pannonia, and Asia):

ad 23 feb.: In Sirmi / In Pannoniis Sinerotis Antigoni Rutili Libii¹¹

In Asia Sinonis Heruli Cusconi Menalippi Zenonis Senertis Sirici.¹²

The editors of the *Hieronymianum* considered this note to be partly drawn on the basis of the fourth-century Greek martyrology from which the *Martyrologium Syriacum* was also copied. They, however, did not include *Sener(o)tis* among the names taken over from that source. The *Hieronymianum* did excerpt this Greek martyrology on the same date thus:

ad 23 feb.: Smirna natale sanctorum Herotis Carpofo^{ri}¹³

The corresponding note in the *Martyrologium Syriacum* is somewhat illuminating:

ad 23 feb.: Ἐν Ἀσίᾳ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχαίων μαρτύρων Πολύκαρπος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος καὶ Ἄρωτος καὶ Κοσκώνιος καὶ Μελάνιππος καὶ Ζήνων.¹⁴

It seems that the Greek martyrologist confused Sirmium with Smyrna, and consequently associated Syneros with Polycarp (celebrated on the same date, the 23rd of February). He is also responsible for corrupting the name. The martyrologist interpreted Syneros as two distinct words: *Συνερωτος > σύν + *Ερωτος. The preposition was dropped, the martyrologist retaining only *Ερωτος.

Delehaye attributed this mistake to the compiler of the *Martyrologium Syriacum*.¹⁵ However, the subsequent phonetic changes in both the *Hieronymianum* and the *Martyrologium Syriacum* suggest that it had already occurred in the Greek martyrology that served as their common model. From there the Syriac martyrology changed the name into Ἄρωτος, while the *Hieronymianum* Latinised it as *Herotis*. The ensuing geographic confusions explain also why the compiler of the *Hieronymianum* felt the need to specify in second note on the 23rd of February the celebration of Syneros (in the form *Sener(o)tis*) in Asia.

The *Hieronymianum* mentions Syneros also on the 22nd of February, this time corrupting the name, and associating him to a group of unnamed martyrs:

¹¹ This is the reconstruction of Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 111; *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 23 feb. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 24): Bern. Wissenb. *Seneroti*; Rich. *Senerotis*.

¹² *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 23 feb. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 24), with the following variants for *Sinertis*: Eptern. *Inertis*; Wissenb. *Sinerotis*; C. *Sinertis*; L. M. *Sineritis*. See also Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 111 and 113n48.

¹³ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 111.

¹⁴ De Rossi and Duchesne, *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, LIII.

¹⁵ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 112n1 and n19.

ad 22 feb.: Sirmi natale sancti Seneri et aliorum XVI¹⁶

Taking into account the correspondence with the *Passio Sereni* in terms of name form and date, Delehaye believed this note was based on the *Passio Sereni*. The indications of the *passio* on the date of Syneros' martyrdom (the 22nd of February in most copies¹⁷) and the phonetically altered name would have been reason enough for the compiler of the *Hieronymianum* to add a doublet note, one day earlier than the late antique feast-day (the 23rd of February). Delehaye furthermore argued that, since the *Passio Sereni* does not mention any companions for Syneros, and no manuscript of the *passio* transmits the name *Senerus*, the note should be emended to "Sirmi natale sancti Sereni."¹⁸ This is only partially true: The two oldest copies of the *Passio Sereni*, unknown to Delehaye, do attest the form *Senerus*.¹⁹

The *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum*, too, mentions a martyr Synetos on the 22nd of February:

ad. 22 feb.: Καὶ Συνετοῦ μάρτυρος²⁰

Taken together, late antique martyrologies indicate that Syneros' cult was known both in the Latin West and the Greek East. Their contradictions, however, challenge attempts to establish Syneros' ancient feast-day. Accepting that the *Hieronymianum*'s note for the 22nd of February is derived from the *Passio Sereni*, one must assume that Syneros used to be celebrated on the 23rd. Nothing leads to think that the *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* was similarly influenced by the *passio* – but neither does it know the commemoration of the martyr on the 23rd of February, irrespective of corruptions in the name. It is likely that the synaxarist found it in a martyrology or calendar. Syneros' commemoration on the 22nd of February is, thus, secondary, and entered the martyrological tradition under the influence of the *Passio Sereni*. At any rate, it seems in this case we ought to distinguish between the date of the martyrdom (the 22nd of February in the *Passio Sereni*) and the date of celebration (the 23rd of February as per the *Hieronymianum*).

1.3. Medieval Martyrological Sources

Medieval martyrologies are likewise indebted to the *Passio Sereni*, this time for the content of his eulogy. They maintained, however, the date of the 23rd of February (VII Kal. martii). In the early ninth century, the Anonymus Lugdunensis introduced Syneros to the medieval martyrological tradition thus:

¹⁶ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 22 feb. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 24): Bern. Rich. *Seneri*; Eptern. Wissenb. C. *Sereni*.

¹⁷ Except Brussels, KBR 9290 (twelfth century), and Liège, Bibl. du Séminaire, LGS 6.N.6 (c. 1450).

¹⁸ Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 108 and 110n57.

¹⁹ Vienna, ÖNB 371, and Vat.lat. 5771. Cf. Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 91.

²⁰ *Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum* ad 22 feb. (ed. Delehaye, 484.7).

ad 23 feb.: Apud Syrmium, natale sancti Syreni monachi: qui tempore Maximiani imperatoris, cum unius ex domesticis eius uxorem, hora incongrua in horto quem ipse sibi excolebat deambulanti acrius increpando repulisset, iubente Maximiano tentus, et christianum se esse confessus, capite caesus est.²¹

This eulogy represents a very condensed summary of the *Passio Sereni*.²² The martyrology of the Anonymus Lugdunensis contains, however, a novelty in considering that Syneros was an ascetic – something that baffled scholarship until recently. I demonstrated elsewhere that this is certainly an addition, which emerged from the association of Syneros' hagiographic image with ascetic / monastic virtues.²³ "Monachus" was perpetuated in subsequent martyrologies, from where it entered also the transmission history of the *Passio Sereni*: Copies of the second subfamily also style Syneros as "monachus."²⁴

The anonymous martyrologist's eulogy was copied in full by Florus, who supplemented it with information on Syneros' companions taken from the *Hieronymianum*. He gives their number as sixty-two.²⁵ From Florus, the eulogy was taken over by Ado, with the notable difference that Ado altered the name to *Serenus*:

ad 23 feb.: Apud Syrmium, beati Sereni monachi, qui cum tempore Maximiani imperatoris, cum unius ex domesticis eius uxorem, hora incongrua in horto, quem ipse sibi excolebat, deambulanti, acrius increpando repulisset, iubente Maximiano tentus, et christianum se esse confessus, capite caesus est. Item aliorum sexaginta duorum, qui ibidem passi sunt.²⁶

Usuard, in turn, used both Ado and Florus. He compressed the eulogy on Syneros, but extended the note on the sixty-two companions. In Usuard we find yet another form of the martyr's name, *Sineri*. This form appears also in one of the witnesses of the *Passio Sereni*, Angers, Bibl. Mun. 807 (as an addition by a later hand). It is possible that the scribe found it in Usuard, and sought to correct the previous copyist's error:

ad 23 feb.: Apud Syrmium, Beati Sineri monachi et martyris, qui iubente Maximiano imperatore tentus, cum se christianum esse confiteretur, capite caesus est. Item, natalis sexaginta duum, qui martyrii certamen in praefata urbe consummantes, regna mansura perceperunt.²⁷

²¹ Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique*, 38.

²² Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 186.

²³ Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 88-91.

²⁴ Brussels, KBR 9290 (twelfth century); Liège, Bibl. du Séminaire, LGS 6.N.6 (c. 1450); Utrecht, UB 391 (2 B 1) (1424-1426).

²⁵ Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique*, 38: "Item aliorum sexaginta duorum, qui ibidem passi sunt." Cf. Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, 328.

²⁶ Dubois and Renaud, *Le martyrologe d'Adon*, 92.

²⁷ Dubois, *Le martyrologe d'Usuard*, 186.

The Roman martyrology embellished stylistically Usuard's note, but reverted to the name given in previous martyrologies:

ad 23 feb.: Apud Sirmium beati Sireni, Monachi et Martyris, qui, iubente Maximiano Imperatore, retentus est, et, cum se Christianum esse confiteretur, capite obtruncatus. Ibidem natalis sanctorum septuaginta duorum Martyrum, qui, martyrii certamen in praefata urbe consummantes, mansura perceperunt regna.²⁸

1.4. The *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*

The great medieval compilation of saints' lives copied and circulated on the territory of Austria²⁹ must be mentioned here on account of its peculiar treatment of Syneros. Whereas the hagiographies of most Pannonian martyrs are included in the collection, the *Passio Sereni* is not. The anonymous scribe who put together the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum* wrote instead an epitome of the *Passio Sereni* into which he adapted the eulogy found in earlier martyrologies. Below I cite Heiligenkreuz, Stiftsbibl., H 11, f. 140ra (twelfth century), and give the variants of the other four witnesses:³⁰

Passio sancti Syreni martyris et aliorum. Temporibus Maximiani imperatoris beatus Syreneus monachus felici martyrio coronatus et pro labore certaminis requiem adeptus est eternae mercedis. Hic ergo apud Syrmium certavit et uicit et suum Christo manipulum reportavit. Qui cum unus ex domesticis eius uxorem
5 hora incongrua in hortum quem ipse sibi excolebat deambulanti acrius increpando repulisset, ipso iubente imperatore tentus est et Christianum se esse confessus est et capite caesus.

1 Syreni: Syrenei Z, Sinerii A || martyris: om. Z || aliorum: monachi A || temporibus: tempore Z A M || 2 Syreneus: Synerus A, Syrenus M || 4 unus: unum Z || 5 uxorem ... incongrua: hora incongrua cum uxorem Z || hortum: horreum Z || 6 repulisset: reppulisset A || ipso: Christo L || imperatore: inperatore A || 7 confessus est: pronuntians Z || caesus: add. est Z

1.5. Concluding Observations on the Hagiographic Dossier

From the inventory above, we can deduce the following with regard to the martyr's name: Ultimately, all the late antique attestations can be reduced to a single form: *Syneros, the Genitive of which appears in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*

²⁸ Johnson and Ward, *Martyrologium Romanum*, 46.

²⁹ On the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*, see Poncelet, "De magno legendario," 24-38.

³⁰ Z = Zwettl, Stiftsbibl. 13, f. 134ra (end of twelfth century); A = Admont, Stiftsbibl. 25, f. 159rb (thirteenth century); L = Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibl. 59, f. 11rb (fifteenth century); M = Melk, Stiftsbibl. M4, f. 27ra-b (fifteenth century).

and on epigraphic sources from the northern cemetery of Sirmium. The noun is Greek, in conformity with the Greek origin of Syneros explained in the *Passio Sereni*. Syneros is preferable to other scholarly reconstructions (*Synerotas, *Synerotes) not just because of its higher frequency in ancient times,³¹ but also because it elucidates the transition to a second declension noun in its Latinised forms: *Syneros > Senerus > Serenus). In the process of Latinisation, the name suffered further changes, such as opening of the vowel -i- into -e-, methatesis (Senerus > Serenus). By the ninth century the more popular form *Serenus* had appeared, adopted in martyrologies and the witnesses of the *passio*. Ruinart's edition further sanctioned this form, although recent research attempted to return to the late antique form attested in epigraphic sources. Variants (*Senerus*, *Serenus*) appear also in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* on the 22nd of February, probably borrowed from the *Passio Sereni*.

The place of Syneros' martyrdom can be established with relative ease on the basis of the epigraphic evidence found *in situ*: It is Sirmium. That Syeros happened to be martyred one day prior to the martyrdom of Polycarp, in Smyrna, that his feast-day coincided with the commemoration of Polycarp, only fostered the confusion between the two locations (Sirmium and Smyrna). Consequently, at a very early date, the Oriental martyrological tradition (cf. *Martyrologium Syriacum*) located Syneros' martyrdom in Asia. Note that the association with Smyrna is mentioned explicitly only in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, among its excerpts from Eastern martyrologies.

In terms of date, the more archaic note in the *Hieronymianum* might refer to the celebration of Syneros' martyrdom at Sirmium, and not to the day he was martyred – this being the 22nd of February. It is also possible that the festival commemorating Syneros lasted several days, as Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić and Efthymios Rizos proposed.³² Such a festival explains why sources alternate inconsistently between the 22nd and the 23rd of February.

More complications arise when attempting to identify the year in which Syneros was martyred. The only pointers are found, in this case too, in the *Passio Sereni*: We are told that the martyr went into hiding in the initial stages of the persecution; and only Galerius is mentioned (i.e., Maximianus), but not Diocletian. The *passio* sets the martyrdom of Syneros explicitly during Galerius' dominion over the Pannonian provinces. From here scholars inferred a date between 305 and 308 AD.³³ Nagy proposed narrowing this interval to the year 305 AD.³⁴ He argued that

³¹ Cf. Heikki Solin, *Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom. Ein Namenbuch*, vol. 1, CIL Auctarium. SN 2, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 152-153.

³² Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić and Efthymios Rizos, "Record E05830," *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E05830> (accessed 23.03.2021). Cf. Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 91.

³³ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 87; Jarak, "Martyres," 269-270 (according to both the *Passio* makes reference to Galerius as Augustus and not as Caesar); Mirković, *Sirmium: Istorija*, 116; Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 223; Smirnov-Brkić and Rizos, "Record E05830" (accessed 23.03.2021) – although the latter consider 307 AD as the last possible date.

Galerius upheld the persecution until ca 305 AD. Therefore, the date of Syneros' death must have been the 22nd of February 305.

This thesis has a major setback in the fact that the *Passio Sereni* presents circumstances of the persecution not to lend historical accuracy to the narrative, but rather to suit a theology of martyrdom that stresses the martyr's spiritual growth and authority.³⁵ Certain are just that Syneros must have suffered martyrdom during the Diocletianic persecution; and that, as a layperson, his death fell under the last of the four edicts. He must have died after 304.

Finally, Syneros' cult was observed at Sirmium throughout the fourth century. It may have developed already in the Constantinian period, and flourished well into the fifth century. The population displacements that characterised that century may have led to the transfer of Syneros' relics as well, this time to the village of Billom, in Gaul, where the relics were deposited in a church dedicated to Syneros. In the sixteenth century locals still honoured the martyr under the name of *Cerneuf*.³⁶ Confusion with Firmium in Piceno, Italy, or the misspelling of Sirmium led to Syneros being honoured in this city too.³⁷

³⁴ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 62.

³⁵ Cf. also Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 92.

³⁶ Louis Sebastien Lenain de Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*, vol. 5, 2nd ed. (Paris: Charles Robustel, 1702), 256; Iohannes Bollandus, "De sancto Sireno, sive Sinerio, monacho et martyre Sirmi in Pannonia Inferiore," *ActaSS Februarii*, vol. 3 (Antwerpen: Iacobus Meursius, 1658), 365-366. Against the identification of this martyr with Syneros, see Zeiller, *Les origines*, 88n2.

³⁷ Bollandus, "De sancto Sireno," 364; Joseph-Marie Sauget, "Serenio di Sirmio," *BSS* 11 (1968): 864. Bollandus (pp. 364-365) mentions another place, Sexti Firmum in Spain, which results from the same confusion of place-names. Cf. also Theodoricus Ruinart, "Admonitio in Acta sancti Sereni martyris," in *Acta martyrum sincera et selecta* (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859), 516; Sauget, "Serenio," 865. Here, however, Syneros' story suffered a complete makeover.

2. *PASSIO SERENI SIRMIENSIS*

2.1. Introduction

The *Passio Sereni* stands in stark contrast to the other hagiographies from Pannonia Secunda examined here (*Passio Irenaei* and *Passio Pollionis*). If the latter dwelt mainly on court proceedings and the dialogue between the martyr and the governor, the *Passio Sereni* presents us with an elaborate, almost novelistically flavoured plot. Syneros' trial for being a Christian is expedited in just a few paragraphs. The lion's share of the *passio* narrates instead the events that precipitated his arrest. This has implications also on the use of Scriptures: Whereas the conversations of Irenaeus and Pollio with Probus are infused with scriptural language and imagery, Syneros hardly appeals to the Bible.³⁸ In framing the martyr's story, however, the redactor of the *Passio Sereni* was inspired by the story of Susannah in the book of Daniel and by the hagiography of another gardener-martyr, Conon.³⁹

We are told, in fact, that Syneros had been a travelling foreigner who eventually settled at Sirmium. When the persecution broke out, he went into hiding for a short time, but he soon returned to tending his garden, this being his only source of livelihood. One day he saw a matron (a married aristocratic woman) strolling in his garden with two maidservants. Syneros immediately questioned the matron's actions, since she was out and about during midday siesta. Understanding that she intended to meet a lover, Syneros rebuked her and turned her away from the garden. His *parrhesia* earned him the animosity of the matron, who immediately complained to her husband. It is revealed that the husband was an imperial guard who at the time was serving the emperor in some other place. Maximianus, the emperor in question, gave the husband permission to return to Sirmium and seek justice against the offense brought to his wife. And so, Syneros was arrested and brought to trial.

In the course of the trial, Syneros exposed the matron's infidelity. By doing so, he brought shame upon the husband, who fell silent. At that point, however, the governor⁴⁰ realised that this morally upright man with uncommon *parrhesia* towards his betters must be a Christian. When Syneros acknowledged this, the governor pronounced capital sentence against him. Significantly, Syneros was not even asked

³⁸ Smirnov-Brkić and Rizos, "Record E05830," (accessed 23.03.2021), also discussed the discrepancies between the *Passio Sereni* and other Pannonian martyr-narratives.

³⁹ Dn 13:1-64 (cf. Praet, "Susanna," 571-580); *Mart. Cononis* (ed. Musurillo, 186-192). I shall approach this subject in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

⁴⁰ Another contrasting feature with other *passiones*: The official who conducts the trial remains unnamed.

to offer sacrifice. He was found guilty on the grounds that he evaded performing the mandatory sacrifice by going into hiding.

In the absence of a comprehensive study on the transmission history of the *Passio Sereni*, scholarship thought it was handed down in two versions: A shorter one (BHL 7596) and a longer one (BHL 7595). The Bollandists were aware of five manuscripts that transmitted BHL 7595, *inc.*: “Apud Sirmiensem ciuitatem Serenus peregrinus, graecus ciuis;” expl. “et adductus ad locum, a diaboli ministris decollatus est. Martyrizatus est autem s. Serenus VIII kal. mart., regnante... Amen.” However, the Bollandist edition in the third volume of *ActaSS Februarii* published BHL 7596 from a manuscript of the Utrecht Carthusians – probably Utrecht, UB 391 (fifteenth century).⁴¹ Thierry Ruinart published what was thought to be the longer version (corresponding to BHL 7595) from a fourteenth century manuscript preserved at the National Library of France: Paris, BnF lat. 5289. Apart from differences in length and narrative style, what baffled scholars most was that BHL 7596 considered Syneros a “monachus,” just as in medieval martyrological tradition. “Monachus” appears in the title (“*Passio sancti Sereni monachi*”) and in the introductory phrase (“Apud Sirmiensem ciuitatem Serenus peregrinus monachus, Graecus ciuis”).

My analysis of the transmission history demonstrated that both BHL 7596 and BnF lat. 5289 represent, in fact, two distinct, independently shortened versions of BHL 7595. The copyist of BnF lat. 5289 intervened on its model to render the text more elegant and more coherent. BHL 7596, in turn, is essentially an epitome of the *Passio Sereni*. Moreover, the term “monachus” is not characteristic to BHL 7596 alone, but appears in a branch of BHL 7595, from which BHL 7596 was excerpted. Its presence in these witnesses is undoubtedly due to the influence of martyrological tradition.⁴²

I already noted here that “Serenus monachus” ought to be viewed as an invention of medieval martyrologists. It may have been introduced by the Anonymus Lugdunensis or he may have found it in his source. The epithet was probably conferred because elements of Syneros’ portrait in the *Passio Sereni* could be construed as monastic traits. The association of gardening and asceticism is well-known. Symbolising physical labour to earn one’s keep, gardening became a monastic virtue, an integral part of monastic life. In ascetic imagery, the garden is also a locus of spiritual development: Syneros’ spiritual journey takes place on the stage of the garden. As sixth century texts already point to this association between monastic life, spiritual development, and gardening, the tradition of Syneros *monachus* might be an old one, well before the Anonymus Lugdunensis first wrote it down in the ninth century. At any rate, prior to the twelfth century, copies of the *Passio Sereni* are

⁴¹ Bollandus, “De sancto Sireno,” 365.

⁴² See Tamas, “The Hagiographic Dossier,” 93-104.

unaware of this tradition. Even afterwards, it remained isolated, confined only to the region of Liège, from where Utrecht, UB 391 (BHL 7596) took its model.

In sum, the *Passio Sereni* knows only one redaction, which was epitomised in the fifteenth century (BHL 7596) and slightly changed in the fourteenth (Ruinart). The subfamily which provided the model of the epitome added “monachus,” an import from martyrologies.

2.2. The Critical Text and Previous Editions

Since the new critical edition differs pointedly from the Bollandist text and shows that the text published by Ruinart also introduced several innovations, it seems opportune to present these versions in a synoptic table that highlights their differences:

| <i>Pass. Sereni</i> (ed. Tamas) | <i>Pass. Sereni</i> (ed. Ruinart) | <i>Pass. Sereni</i> (ed. Bollandus) |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1. Apud Sirmiensem ciuitatem, Senerus peregrinus, Graecus ciuis, cum de locis peregrinis uenisset, hortum colere coepit ut inde uitam suam transigeret, eo quod aliam artem non nosset.</p> <p>2. Qui tempore persecutionis, metuens corporales plagas, latitauit non multum temporis et paucis mensibus. Postea uero iterum coepit libere hortum suum operari.</p> <p>3. Et dum hoc ageret, quodam die quaedam mulier cum duabus puellis suis ingressa est in hortum eius, et coepit deambulare.</p> <p>4. Cumque eam uidisset supramemoratus senex, ait ad illam: “Quid hic quaeris, mulier?”</p> <p>At illa ait: “Deambulare delectata sum in horto isto.”</p> <p>5. Ille autem dixit: “Quae est talis matrona quae praeterita hora hic deambulare desideret, cum sit hora iam sexta? Sed</p> | <p>1. Apud Sirmiensem civitatem Serenus peregrinus, Graecus civis, cum de locis peregrinis venisset, hortum colere coepit, ut inde vitam transigeret, eo quod aliam artem non nosset.</p> <p>Qui tempore persecutionis metuens temporales plagas, latitavit non multum temporis, et paucis mensibus. Postea vero hortum sum coepit iterum libere operari; et dum hoc ageret, quodam die quaedam mulier cum duabus puellis ingressa est in hortum eius, et coepit deambulare.</p> <p>Cumque eam vidisset supramemoratus senex, ait illi: “Quid hic quaeris, mulier?”</p> <p>At illa ait: Ambulare delector in horto isto.</p> <p>Ille autem dixit: “Quae est talis matrona, quae praeterita hora hic deambulat?</p> <p>Cum sit hora iam sexta.</p> | <p>1. Apud Sirmiensem ciuitatem, Syrenus peregrinus monachus, Graecus ciuis, cum de locis peregrinis uenisset, hortum colere coepit, ut inde uitam transigeret, eo quod aliam artem non nosset.</p> <p>Qui tempore persecutionis metuens corporales plagas, latitauit:</p> <p>et dum excoleret hortum suum, quadam die quaedam mulier</p> <p>ingressa hortum eius, coepit deambulare hora incompetenti. Cumque eam uir sanctus</p> |

intelligo te non causa deambulandi huc uenisse, sed **causa** indisciplinationis et **lasciuitatis**. Ideoque egredere **hinc**, et habe disciplinam, ut **solent honestae matronae** habere.”

2. At illa cum confusione egressa **est de horto sanctissimi uiri, et non intra se** fremere, **et non iniuriam dolere quod pulsa est inde**, sed quod libidinis suae causam non adimpleret.

2. **Quae statim** scripsit ad uirum suum qui erat domesticus Maximiani imperatoris, insinuans ei iniuriam quam passa fuisset.

3. Cumque **accepisset has litteras uir eius et legisset**, statim **conqueritur uir eius imperatori**, et ait:

“Nos cum lateri tuo adhaereamus, matronae nostrae in longinquo positae **iniurias** patiuntur.” 4. At ille **cum haec audisset**, dedit ei potestatem ut uindicaret **in eum, quemadmodum placeret ei**, per rectorem prouinciae. 5. **Hanc igitur cum accepisset potestatem**, festinabat uenire ut uindicaret iniuriam non matronae, sed inhonestae feminae.

3. Cum **superuenisset** ad supramemoratam **ciuitatem**, statim ingressus ad praesidem, et uerbum iniuriae prosequitur, et **scriptum imperiale** porrigit, et ait ei: “Vindica iniuriam quam me absente passa est matrona **mea**.”

Intelligo te non causa deambulandi huc uenisse, sed indisciplinationis et **lasciviae**, ideoque egredere, et habe disciplinam, ut **decet honestas matronas** habere.

2. At illa cum confusione egressa, coepit **intra se** fremere,

non dolore suae expulsionis, sed quod libidinis suae causam non adimpleret.

Quae **tamen** scripsit ad uirum suum, qui erat domesticus Maximiani Imperatoris, insinuans ei iniuriam quam passa fuisset.

Cumque **legisset vir eius litteras**, statim **conqueritur ad Regem** et ait:

Nos cum lateri tuo adhaeremus, matronae nostrae in longinquo positae **iniuriam** patiuntur. At ille

dedit ei potestatem ut uindicaret **se** per Rectorem prouinciae, **ut sibi placeret**. **Hac igitur potestate accepta**, festinabat uenire ut uindicaret iniuriam, non matronae, sed inhonestae feminae.

Cum **vero pervenisset** ad supramemoratam **urbem**, statim ingressus ad Praesidem; et uerbum iniuriae prosequitur, et **scripta imperialia** porrigit, et ait ei: Vindica iniuriam, quam me absente passa est **mea** matrona.

caussa lasciuitatis **discurrere cognouisset, increpauit eam, monens ut egrederetur, et ut honesta matrona discipline se haberet.**

At illa cum confusione egressa de horto **uiri Dei**, coepit fremere,

dolens non quod inde pulsa esset, sed quod libidinis suae causam non adimpleret.

Et statim scripsit ad uirum suum, qui erat Domesticus Maximiani Imperatoris, insinuans ei iniuriam, quam passa fuisset.

2. **Cumque accepisset litteras uir eius et legisset**, statim **conquestus**, ait **Imperatori Maximiano**:

Nos cum lateri tuo adheremus, matronae nostrae in longinquo positae **iniuriam** patiuntur. At ille

dedit ei potestatem ut uindicaret **in eum** per Rectorem prouinciae.

Ille ergo profectus ad Iudicem, ei Imperialia dicta porrexit, conquerens de Syreno.

2. At ubi audiuit hoc praeses, mirari coepit, et dixit **ad eum**: “Quis enim ausus **fuit** iniuriam irrogare matronae **diuino** lateri adhaerentis?” At ille **respondit**: “**Senerus** quidam plebeius hortulanus.” 3. Cumque de nomine audisset praeses, iussit eum statim exhiberi. **At ubi exhibitus est beatus Senerus, statutus est ante** conspectum praesidis.

4. Ait **ad illum** praeses: “Quis uocaris?” At ille respondit: “**Senerus.**”

5. Praeses dixit: “Cuius **loci** es?” At ille: “Hortulanus.”

6. Praeses dixit: “Quare iniuriam **importasti** matronae tanti uiri?” Ille **autem** respondit: “Nulli matronae iniuriam **aliquando** feci.”

7. Praeses autem furibundus dixit: “Argue illum ut confiteatur **et memoretur ante hos dies** cui matronae **fecit iniuriam**, cum in horto ipsius deambulare **uoluisset.**”

At ille sine **aliqua** trepidatione respondit: “Scio me retinere **quod** ante hos dies **aliqua matrona** in horto meo hora indecenti **deambulabat.** Increpauit eam, et dixi quod non recte uersaretur mulier quae **illa** hora **foras** de domo uiri sui egressa esset.”

8. **Cumque hoc audisset** uir **eius**, impurissimae atque indisciplinatae mulieris actum, erubuit et obmutuit, nihilque amplius loqui **uel suggerere** praesidi **ausus est**, ut uindicaret **iniuriam** propter quam uenerat, quia

At ubi audivit haec Praeses, mirari coepit, et dixit **ei**: Quis enim ausus **est** iniuriam irrogare matronae **vir**i lateri **Regis** adhaerentis? At ille **dixit**: **Serenus** quidam plebeius hortulanus. Cumque de nomine audisset Praeses, iussit eum statim exhiberi, **qui** exhibitus stetit in

conspectus Praesidis.

Et ait illi Praeses: Quis vocaris? At ille respondit: **Serenus.**

Praeses dixit: Cuius **artis** es? At ille **ait**: Hortulanus **sum.** Praeses dixit: Quare iniuriam **irrogasti** matronae tanti uiri? Ille respondit: Nulli matronae **aliquando** iniuriam feci.

Praeses autem furibundus dixit: Argue illum, ut confiteatur cui matronae **iniuriam fecerit**, cum in horto ipsius deambulare **vellet.**

At ille sine **omni** trepidatione respondit: Scio me retinere, ante hos dies **quamdam matronam** in horto meo hora indecenti **ambulasse.** Increpavi eam, et dixi, quod non recte versaretur mulier, quae **tali** hora de domo uiri sui egressa **fuiisset.**

Hoc audiens vir **suus** impurissimae atque indisciplinatae mulieris actum, erubuit, et obmutuit, nihilque amplius **suggessit** Praesidi, ut vindicaret propter quam uenerat **iniuriam**, quia

At Praeses ei sibi exhibito dixit:

Quare **intulisti iniuriam** matronae tanti uiri? **At ille constanter** respondit: Nulli matronae **aliquam** iniuriam feci:

sed recordor, quod ante hos dies **quaedam mulier** in horto meo hora indecenti **deambulabat, quam** increpauit, et dixi, quod non recte uersaretur mulier, quae **illa** hora egressa de domo uiri sui esset.

Quod cum audisset uir **eius,**

erubuit et obmutuit, nihilque amplius loqui Praesidi ausus est.

nimium confusus est.

4. Praeses uero **cum responsionem beatissimi uiri audisset**, intra **semetipsum** cogitare coepit de eius libera obiurgatione, et ait: "Hic homo Christianus est, cui **hora praeterita** displicuit mulierem uidere in hortum suum **ambulare**."

2. Et dixit **ad illum**: "Quod **genus es**?"

At ille sine **aliqua** mora respondit: "Christianus sum." 3. Praeses **dixit**: "Vsque nunc ubi latitasti? Vel quomodo subterfugisti ut diis non sacrificares?" At ille **respondit**: "Quomodo placuit Deo **hucusque me reseruare** in corpore. Eram autem sicut lapis proiectus ab **aedificio**, nunc autem **requirit** me Dominus **ut** in aedificium suum **me constituat**."

Modo autem quia palam uoluit me esse, paratus sum pro nomine eius pati, **ut cum caeteris sanctis eius** habeam partem in regno ipsius."

4. Praeses autem **cum haec audisset** uehementer iratus **est, et** dixit:

"Quia hucusque **subterfugisti, et** imperialia praecepta latendo contempsisti, et **quia** diis sacrificare noluisti, iubemus te capite plecti."

5. **Qui**, statim raptus, **est** adductus **ad locum, a diaboli ministris** decollatus est.

2. **Martyrizatus est autem sanctus Senerus die octauo kalendas martias, regnante domino nostro**

nimium confusus est.

3. Praeses uero **cum responsionem sancti uiri audisset**, intra **se** cogitare coepit de eius libera obiurgatione, et ait: Hic homo Christianus est, cui **indecenti hora** displicuit mulierem uidere in **horto suo**,

et dixit **ad illum**: Quod **genus tibi est**?

At ille sine **omni** mora respondit: Christianus sum. Praeses **dixit**: Usque nunc ubi latitasti, vel quomodo subterfugisti, ut diis non sacrificares? At ille **respondit**: Quomodo placuit Deo, **ut huc usque me reservavit** in corpore. Eram autem sicut lapis proiectus ab **aedificatione**; nunc autem **requiret** me Dominus in aedificium suum.

Modo autem quia palam uoluit me esse, paratus sum pro nomine eius pati, **ut cum ceteris sanctis eius** habeam partem in regno ipsius.

Praeses autem **cum haec audisset**, uehementer iratus dixit:

Quia huc usque imperialia praecepta latendo contempsisti; et **quia** diis sacrificare noluisti, iubemus te capite plecti.

Et statim raptus **et** adductus, **a diaboli ministris** decollatus est

octavo Kalendas Martii, regnante Domino nostro

3. Praeses uero

intra **semetipsum** cogitare coepit de **sancti uiri** libera obiurgatione, et ait: Hic homo Christianus est, cui displicuit mulierem in hortum suum **impudice se gerentem uidere**.

Dixitque illi: Cuius **professionis es**?

At ille sine **aliqua** mora respondit: Christianus sum. **Cui** Praeses: Vsque nunc ubi latitasti, uel quomodo subterfugisti, ut diis non sacrificares? At ille, Quomodo, **inquit**, placuit Deo, **usque nunc** me **reseruauit** in corpore:

modo autem quia palam uoluit me esse, paratus sum pro nomine eius pati,

ut habeam partem in regno ipsius.

Praeses autem **haec audiens**, uehementer iratus, dixit:

Quia hucusque Imperialia praecepta latendo contempsisti, et diis sacrificare noluisti, iubemus te capite plecti,

qui statim raptus **ac ductus ad locum passionis**, decollatus est.

Iesu Christo cui est
gloria in
saecula saeculorum,
amen.

Iesu Christo, cui est
honor et Gloria in
saecula saeculorum.
Amen.

2.3. Historical Reliability and Date

Scholarship in general treated the *Passio Sereni* with skepticism when it came to its historical reliability.⁴³ Far from being a narrative re-working of an authentic document,⁴⁴ it rather represents a purposeful literary-theological creation.⁴⁵ The question, then, is: What historical information, *stricto sensu*, does it contain? In other words: Was the protagonist of the *Passio Sereni* a historical martyr? And if so, what can we learn about him from this text?

The epigraphic evidence presented in section 1.1. speaks for a popular cult dedicated to Syneros, suggesting that there existed, indeed, a Christian martyr with this name. It is safe to accept that he had suffered martyrdom in the early fourth century, as a consequence of Diocletian's edicts of persecution. It is also plausible that he was a foreigner of Greek origins. With respect to other indications, such as him being a gardener, not to mention the matrona affair and Syneros' ensuing trial for *contumelia*, one has to exert caution. Like many other Pannonian hagiographies, the *Passio Sereni* too was meant to provide the devotees of his cult with a foundational story.⁴⁶ The story was carefully weaved to so that it transmitted a clear message of spiritual development and upright Christian morality.⁴⁷

Where and when was this text composed? The answer depends, as usual with Pannonian hagiographic narratives, on insights gained from the text and clues gathered from Syneros' local cult. The latter flourished in the second half of the fourth century. Nothing concrete points to later than the fifth century. It may be surmised that the barbarian pillagings and occupation disrupted the Sirmian cult of Syneros. The relics were probably moved on that occasion. If Irenaeus' cult seems to have been still in place during the brief Byzantine spell in the sixth century (and his fame consequently spread in Byzantine territories), this is not the case with Syneros. The Byzantine conquerors either no longer found an active cult dedicated to Syneros, or they chose not to foster it.

Since Syneros' commemoration remained essentially local, it is reasonable to assume that the *Passio Sereni* had been written for the use of the community in

⁴³ See, e.g., the motivation of Musurillo, *The Acts*, XII.

⁴⁴ As in Herzog and Schmidt, *Restoration*, 530.

⁴⁵ In Jarak's view ("Martyres," 269), the intentional literary-theological composition does not exclude the use of a first-rate document – possibly the proconsular acts, albeit the redactor's creative reworking makes it impossible to comment further on the nature of this document.

⁴⁶ As already noted by Praet, "Susanna," 559.

⁴⁷ More on this in section 3 below.

Sirmium. Another foothold for this assumption is that garden imagery occupied a prominent place in Pannonian Christian art.⁴⁸ The symbolism is similar to that encountered in the *Passio Sereni*. Its redactor found ample inspiration in artwork and the meanings commonly associated with it.

In one of her last contributions, the regretted Miroslava Mirković advanced an intriguing hypothesis: Analysing the epitaphs from the northern cemetery of Sirmium, where Syneros' *memoria* was located, she observed many high-ranking and elite burials connected with the court of Constantius II. In view of this connection, Mirković proposed that the cemetery was frequented by Arian Christians. Nicenes, instead, would have opted for burial in the cemetery around Irenaeus' *martyrium*. Mirković lent further substance to this theory by interpreting traces of epitaph destruction as a sort of *damnatio memoriae* operated by Nicene Christians.⁴⁹ This probably happened after 376 AD, when Sirmium received once again a Nicene bishop or, more likely, when Valentinian II and Iustina, whose Arian sympathies were notorious, removed the court to Ravenna (after 380 AD).

Should the two cemeteries reflect indeed local factionalism, the structural discrepancies between the *Passio Sereni* and the rest of the Sirmian hagiographic production would be easier to explain. Unfortunately, we have no way of verifying this theory. The *Altercatio Heracliani*, a late fourth-century source from Sirmium, does reveal local strife on doctrinal matters.⁵⁰ But this is the most that can be stated with certainty. The inscriptions *ad Synerotem* contain no clue in this sense, apart from the fact that Artemidora and Aurelia Aminia belonged to the local elite. Furthermore, at the level of intentionality, the message transmitted by the *Passio Sereni* harmonises well with, e.g., the moral lesson offered by Pollio in the *Passio Pollionis*.⁵¹

Having located the composition of the *Passio Sereni* in Pannonia – specifically at Sirmium – presents us with a good start for its dating. From the text it transpires that the matron rebuked by Syneros is married to a personal guard of the emperor, but that emperor and husband are somewhere else, at a considerable distance. In stating the husband's function, the *passio* uses technical terminology common to the late fourth century: "domesticus" (2.2.) and "diuino lateri adhaerentis" (3.2.), in reference to the technical *protectores domestici* and *protectores diuini lateris*, respectively.⁵² That the family is established at Sirmium, but the emperor and the guard are not, suggests the redactor had in mind a period when the court no longer resided at Sirmium. Again, this does not signify that the matron and her husband are historical persons. The situation, nonetheless, is historically possible. In the later empire, the praetorian guards were regularly recruited from the Pannonian legions.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 66-7.

⁴⁹ Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 128-130. See also Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 86-87.

⁵⁰ *Altercatio Heracliani laici cum Germinio episcopo Sirmiensi* (ed. Caspari, 133-147).

⁵¹ Cf. also the considerations of Nagy, "Ascetic Christianity," 99-103.

⁵² For this technical meaning and further sources, see *ThesLL* 5/2: 1871-1872, s.v. "domesticus, II.2," and *ThesLL* 10/2: 2255, s.v. "protector, 2.b." Cf. also Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 111n3.

This gives us a rather well-defined *terminus post quem*: 380 AD, but also a *terminus ante quem*, the fall of the Western Empire. Such chronology fits well the period when Syneros' cult flourished at Sirmium. Taken together, the above considerations enable us to establish the composition of the *Passio Sereni* to the later fourth – early fifth century.

To a similar conclusion lead also the parallels with the *Martyrdom of Conon*. This hagiography narrates the arrest, trial, and death of another gardener, Conon, executed in Magydos, in Pamphilia. It states that at the outbreak of the persecution the population of Magydos fled and emptied the entire city. A scouting party was organized, which found Conon attending an imperial garden. The martyr is portrayed as an old man (παππία), a foreigner (ξένου ἀνθρώπου), and a day-laborer (μοχθοῦντα καθ' ἡμέραν).⁵³ Syneros' affinities with the description of Conon are evident: Both are immigrants, both are old, both belong to the plebs. Scenes of flight from persecution are featured in both texts. Like Syneros, who had no other profession than gardening, Conon is also portrayed as a simpleton. It is reasonable, thus, to state that Conon could have served as a model for the portrait of Syneros in the *Passio Sereni*.

According to Herbert Musurillo, the *Martyrium Cononis* was written in post-Constantinian times,⁵⁴ but its *terminus ante quem* is more tangible: This hagiographic narrative most likely served as model also for Asterius of Amasea's homily on Phocas, another gardener-martyr.⁵⁵ Since Asterius wrote his homilies at the beginning of the fifth century, it follows that the *Martyrium Cononis* had been composed earlier. The text clearly enjoyed some popularity if Asterius used it. This makes it possible that, at some point in later fourth or early fifth century, the redactor of the *Passio Sereni*, not knowing much of the gardener whose story he was supposed to narrate, used the *Martyrdom of Conon* to outline the main features of his portrait.

In light of all this, the *Passio Sereni* should be included into the same hagiographic project designed in the region of Sirmium that birthed the *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis* as well.

2.4. Published Editions and Translations

As mentioned above, the first editions of the *Passio Sereni* appeared in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, by care of Ioannes Bollandus and Thierry Ruinart, respectively. Modern collections and studies reprinted and / or translated these variants. The first critical edition appeared only in 2020:

Ioannes Bollandus, "De S. Sireno, sive Sinerio, monacho et martyre Sirmii in Pannonia Inferiore," *ActaSS Februarii*, vol. 3 (Antwerp: Iacobus Meursius, 1658), 365.

⁵³ *Mart. Cononis* 2.5,6 (ed. Musurillo, 186.23-24; 188.1).

⁵⁴ Musurillo, *The Acts*, XXXIII.

⁵⁵ Asterius of Amasea, *Homily IX* (ed. Datema, 114-127).

Acta martyrum sincera et selecta, ed. Theodoricus Ruinart (Ratisbonae: G. Iosephi Manz, 1859), 517-518.

Hajnalka Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier of Syneros (Serenus) of Sirmium, Gardener and Martyr (BHL 7595-7596)," *SE* 59 (2020): 108-115.

Actas de los mártires, ed. and trans. Daniel Ruiz-Bueno, BAC 75 (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1951), 1172-1176.

Atti dei martiri, trans. Giuliana Caldarelli, LCO 14, 2nd ed. (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 1985), 769-772.

Les martyrs de la Grande Persécution (304-311), trans. A. G. Hamman, Les Pères dans la Foi (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979), 102-104.

Petrus Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae in aetate Tetrarcharum I (A.D. 285-305)*, *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae VI* (Budapest: Pytheas, 2011), 52-56.

Levente Nagy, *Pannóniai városok, mártírok, ereklyék: Négy szenvedéstörténet helyszínei nyomán – Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia: Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories*, *Thesaurus Historiae Ecclesiasticae in Universitate Quinqueecclesiensi 1* (Pécs: Pécsi Történettudományért Kulturális Egyesület, 2012), 56-59.

Милена Милин, "Пасија мученика Синерота," in *Sirmium u na nebu u na zemљи: 1700 година од страдања хришћанских мученика*, 2nd ed. (Sremska Mitrovica: Благо Сирмијума, 2014), 191-192.

Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić and Efthymios Rizos, "Record E05830," *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity Database*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E05830> (accessed 24.03.2021).

The edition and English translation given here are taken from Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier."

Passio Sancti Seneri quod est VIII kalendas martias

1. Apud Sirmiensem ciuitatem, Senerus peregrinus, Graecus ciuis, cum de locis peregrinis uenisset, hortum colere coepit ut inde uitam suam transigeret, eo quod aliam artem non nosset. 2. Qui tempore persecutionis, metuens corporales plagas, latitauit non multum temporis et paucis mensibus. Postea uero iterum coepit libere
- 5 hortum suum operari. 3. Et dum hoc ageret, quodam die quaedam mulier cum duabus puellis suis ingressa est in hortum eius, et coepit deambulare.
4. Cumque eam uidisset supramemoratus senex, ait ad illam: "Quid hic quaeris, mulier?"
- At illa ait: "Deambulare delectata sum in horto isto."
- 10 5. Ille autem dixit: "Quae est talis matrona quae praeterita hora hic deambulare desideret, cum sit hora iam sexta? Sed intelligo te non causa deambulandi huc uenisse, sed causa indisciplinationis et lasciuitatis. Ideoque egredere hinc, et habere disciplinam, ut solent honestae matronae habere."
2. At illa cum confusione egressa est de horto sanctissimi uiri, et coepit intra se
- 15 fremere, et non iniuriam dolere quod pulsa est inde, sed quod libidinis suae causam non adimpleret. 2. Quae statim scripsit ad uirum suum qui erat domesticus Maximiani imperatoris, insinuans ei iniuriam quam passa fuisset. 3. Cumque accepisset has litteras uir eius et legisset, statim conqueritur uir eius imperatori, et ait: "Nos cum lateri tuo adhaereamus, matronae nostrae in longinquo positae iniurias
- 20 patiuntur." 4. At ille cum haec audisset, dedit ei potestatem ut uindicaret in eum, quemadmodum placeret ei, per rectorem prouinciae. 5. Hanc igitur cum accepisset potestatem, festinabat uenire ut uindicaret iniuriam non matronae, sed inhonestae feminae.
3. Cum superuenisset ad supramemoratam ciuitatem, statim ingressus ad
- 25 praesidem, et uerbum iniuriae prosequitur, et scriptum imperiale porrigit, et ait ei: "Vindica iniuriam quam me absente passa est matrona mea."
2. At ubi audiuit hoc praeses, mirari coepit, et dixit ad eum: "Quis enim ausus fuit iniuriam irrogare matronae diuino lateri adhaerentis?"
- At ille respondit: "Senerus quidam plebeius hortulanus."
- 30 3. Cumque de nomine audisset praeses, iussit eum statim exhiberi. At ubi exhibitus est beatus Senerus, statutus est ante conspectum praesidis.

1 peregrinus – ciuis: cf. *Mart. Cononis* 2.6 (ed. Musurillo, 186.24) || 3/4 qui – mensibus: *Mart. Polycarpi* 5 (ed. Musurillo, 4.28-6.1); *Mart. Agapis, Eirenis et Chionis* 1.3 (ed. Musurillo, 280.15-20); *Pass. Quir.* II.1 || 7 senex: *Mart. Cononis* 2.5 (ed. Musurillo, 186.23)

The Martyrdom of Saint Senerus, Which Happened on the 22nd of February

1. When Senerus, a wanderer and a Greek, came from foreign places to the town of the Sirmians, he began to cultivate a garden so that he could live from it, since he knew no other craft. 2. During the persecution, fearing bodily pains, he went into hiding: but not for a long time, just a few months. Indeed, afterwards he openly resumed tending to his garden. 3. While he was doing that, one day a married woman with her two maidservants entered his garden, and began to stroll.

4. And when the above-mentioned old man saw her, he said to her: "What are you looking for here, woman?" At that she said: "I enjoy walking about this garden."

5. He, however, said: "What sort of a married woman is she who wants to walk in here this late, for it is already the sixth hour? But I see you did not come here to walk about, but on account of indiscipline and lascivity. Therefore leave this place, and behave in a disciplined way, as is the custom of honest married women."

2. She, however, left the most holy man's garden confused, and started to rage inwardly – and she did not grieve so much the offense of being driven out of the garden as the fact that she had not fulfilled the purpose of her lust. 2. Instantly she wrote to her husband, who was one of emperor Maximianus' guards,⁵⁶ insinuating the offense she had suffered. 3. Now when her husband received this letter and read it, her husband complained at once to the emperor, and said: "While we are protecting you, our wife, who lives at a great distance, suffers offenses."⁵⁷ 4. When [the emperor] heard these [complaints], he gave him the power to seek revenge against the offender through the rector of the province, as he would please. 5. After he had received this power, therefore, he hastened to go and avenge the offense adduced not to a wife, but to a shameful woman.

3. As he arrived at the above-mentioned town, he sought out the governor at once, filed a complaint, and produced the imperial license, and said to him: "Avenge the offense my wife suffered in my absence."

2. But when the governor heard this, he began to wonder, and said to him: "Indeed, who dared to bring offense to the wife of the emperor's protector?"⁵⁸

He answered: "A certain Senerus, a plebeian gardener."

3. Now when the governor heard this name, he ordered that [Senerus] be brought in immediately. And when the blessed Senerus was brought in, he stood before the governor.

⁵⁶ "Domesticus" denotes here an elite imperial guard. In the matron's husband the redactor envisaged a person of considerable power and influence with the emperor: Maximianus readily gives him leave of absence, and even endorses his mission with an imperial order of prosecution. All this for the sake of an insult brought to his wife's honour.

⁵⁷ The redactor wants Sirmium to be the family's permanent residence, implying that Syneros rebuked a person belonging to his own *ciuitas*. In the imagery of the *passio* this points to the moral laxity of some members of the local community.

⁵⁸ This translation has in view the more technical "protector diuini lateris" (against the *passio*'s "diuino lateri adhaerentis").

4. Ait ad illum praeses: "Quis uocaris?"
At ille respondit: "Senerus."
5. Praeses dixit: "Cuius loci es?"
At ille: "Hortulanus."
- 5 6. Praeses dixit: "Quare iniuriam importasti matronae tanti uiri?"
Ille autem respondit: "Nulli matronae iniuriam aliquando feci."
7. Praeses autem furibundus dixit: "Argue illum ut confiteatur et memoretur ante hos dies cui matronae fecit iniuriam, cum in horto ipsius deambulare uoluisset."
At ille sine aliqua trepidatione respondit: "Scio me retinere quod ante hos dies aliqua
- 10 matrona in horto meo hora indecenti deambulabat. Increpauit eam, et dixi quod non recte uersaretur mulier quae illa hora foras de domo uiri sui egressa esset."
8. Cumque hoc audisset uir eius, impurissimae atque indisciplinatae mulieris actum, erubuit et obmutuit, nihilque amplius loqui uel suggerere praesidi ausus est, ut uindicaret iniuriam propter quam uenerat, quia nimium confusus est.
- 15 4. Praeses uero cum responsionem beatissimi uiri audisset, intra semetipsum cogitare coepit de eius libera obiurgatione, et ait: "Hic homo Christianus est, cui hora praeterita displicuit mulierem uidere in hortum suum ambulare."
2. Et dixit ad illum: "Quod genus es?"
At ille sine aliqua mora respondit: "Christianus sum."
- 20 3. Praeses dixit: "Vsque nunc ubi latitasti? Vel quomodo subterfugisti ut diis non sacrificares?"
At ille respondit: "Quomodo placuit Deo hucusque me reseruare in corpore. Eram autem sicut lapis proiectus ab aedificio, nunc autem requirit me Dominus ut in aedificium suum me constituat. Modo autem quia palam uoluit me esse, paratus sum
- 25 pro nomine eius pati, ut cum caeteris sanctis eius habeam partem in regno ipsius."
4. Praeses autem cum haec audisset uehementer iratus est, et dixit: "Quia hucusque subterfugisti, et imperialia praecepta latendo contempsisti, et quia diis sacrificare noluisti, iubemus te capite plecti."

22/24 eram – constituat: cf. Ps 118:22; Mt 16:17-18; Jn 19:28; Acts 4:11

1/3 Ait – es: cf. *Mart. Cononis* 4.1 (ed. Musurillo, 188.16-18) || 3 cuius – es: cf. *Pass. Poll.* III.2

4. The governor said to him: "What is your name?"

He answered: "Senerus."

5. The governor said: "Where do you come from?"⁵⁹

He [said]: "I am a gardener."

6. The governor said: "Why did you bring offense to the wife of such an important man?"

He answered: "I never offended anyone's wife."

7. But the governor, enraged, said: "Accuse him so that he admits and remembers which woman he offended a few days ago, while she wanted to take a stroll in his garden."

He answered without any fear: "I know that I held back some days ago a woman who was walking about in my garden at an inappropriate hour. I rebuked her, and told her that the married woman who sets out from her husband's house at that hour does not behave correctly."

8. When her husband heard this, this act of a most impure and undisciplined woman, he reddened and fell silent, and dared not say or suggest anything further to the governor that he may avenge the offense on account of which he had come, for he was utterly confused.

4. Yet when the governor heard the answer of the most blessed man, he began to ponder inwardly his free scold, and said: "This man is a Christian, for he disliked seeing the woman walking in his garden at a late hour."

2. And [the governor] said to him: "What is your kind?"

He answered without any qualm: "I am a Christian."

3. The governor said: "Where have you been hiding until now? And how did you evade sacrificing to the gods?"

He answered: "As it was pleasing to God that I remain in the flesh until now. For I was like a stone cast away from the building, but now the Lord seeks me out to place me in his building.⁶⁰ And because he wants that I be [found out] publicly,⁶¹ I am ready to suffer for his name, so that I may have a share in his kingdom, with his other saints."

4. But when the governor heard these things, he became utterly enraged, and said: "Because you evaded until now, and you despised the imperial precepts by hiding, and because you refused to sacrifice to the gods, we command that you be beheaded."

⁵⁹ The governor's initial questions have a clear parallel in *Mart. Cononis* 4.1, where the prefect asks: "Tell me, fellow, where are you from? Of what descent are you? What is your name?" (tr. Musurillo, 189). Perhaps the redactor borrowed "Cuius loci es?" from this text. In his answer, however, Syneros gives his profession rather than his place of origin. This was later sensed as a contradiction, leading to the insertion, in some of the witnesses of the *Passio Sereni*, of a doublet "Cuius loci es? ... Cuius officii?" See Tamas, "The Hagiographic Dossier," 103, at *Pass. Sereni* 3.5. The passage also reminds of the interview conducted along similar lines in the *Passio Pollionis*.

⁶⁰ "Constitutat" has the forceful meaning "to establish," suggesting Syneros' awareness of the eternal reward he was to receive for his act of martyrdom. This allegory has many Scriptural parallels, as referenced by Smirnov-Brkić and Rizos, "Record E05830" (accessed 24.03.2021).

⁶¹ Referring to Syneros' confession in court, in which he reveals in a public setting that he is a Christian.

5. Qui, statim raptus, est adductus ad locum, a diaboli ministris decollatus est. 2. Martyrizatus est autem sanctus Senerus die octauo kalendas martias, regnante domino nostro Iesu Christo cui est gloria in saecula saeculorum, amen.

1 a diaboli ministris: *Pass. Poll.* V.1; *Pass. Iuli* 4.5 (ed. Musurillo, 264.19), *Mart. Carpi* 4.2 (ed. Musurillo, 32.17)

5. Seized immediately, he was brought to the place, and was beheaded by the servants of the devil. 2. Saint Senerus was martyred on eighth day before the Kalends of March, in the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom glory for ever and ever. Amen.

3. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND KAIROLOGICAL MARTYRDOM IN THE *PASSIO SERENI*

In the last decade, three scholarly studies contributed substantially to the analysis of the intertextual network of this non-conventional hagiography: In 2011, Danny Praet revealed the narratological links with the biblical story of Susannah.⁶² Levente Nagy devoted a chapter of his book, *Pannóniai városok, mártírok, ereklyék: Négy szenvedéstörténet helyszínei nyomán (Cities, Martyrs and Relics in Pannonia: Discovering the Topography in Four Pannonian Passion Stories)* to the hagiographic dossier of Syneros, including a number of considerations on the *Passio Sereni*. More recently, in his 2017 chapter “Ascetic Christianity in Pannonian Martyr Stories?” published in the edited volume *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-8th Centuries)*, he treated the *Passio Sereni* as a witness to ascetic tendencies – or, at least, to an ascetic agenda – in late fourth-century Sirmium.⁶³ These studies are indeed foundational, yet they do not exhaust the subject. They focus on particular aspects and elements of a complex theology of martyrdom inherent to the narrative. In this section, I shall present their arguments in general lines and proceed to outline other aspects, untackled thus far. I hope to show that the *Passio Sereni* should be read as an organic narrative which sets the stage for the martyr’s spiritual development, crowned by his public confession and his death. In doing so, the *Passio Sereni* displays a traditional theology of martyrdom, whereby martyrdom itself is granted by God as a gift, as a vocation, and occurs at the opportune moment, equally decided by God.

3.1. Temptation, Immorality, and the Garden

In his analysis of the intertextual and narratological affinity between the *Passio Sereni* and the Susannah story in the book of Daniel, Praet emphasised the following aspects:

Firstly, the sequence of events is similar in the two narratives. Susannah strolls in the garden with two of her maidservants; she is spotted by the elders, who spy on her and attempt to harass her sexually. To their outrage, Susannah fends off their advances. The elders then take revenge by accusing Susannah of adultery. In court, Susannah endures the trial in silence. Finally, Daniel reveals the truth, and she is acquitted of charges. In the *Passio Sereni*, the matron strolls likewise with two maidservants in Syneros’ garden. She is spotted by Syneros, who outrightly accuses her of adulterous intentions. The enraged matron appeals to her husband for revenge. Syneros is arrested and brought to trial. This time Syneros speaks up in his defense,

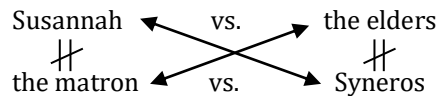
⁶² Praet, “Susanna,” 573-580.

⁶³ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 65-68; Nagy, “Ascetic Christianity, 97-99 and 103-104.

the husband accepts that his wife had been indeed intent on committing adultery, and drops the charges.

Secondly, this sequence frames a series of antitheses and gender inversions, both in the garden episode and in the trial episode of both narratives. In the Susannah story, the garden episode sets Susannah against the elders, just as in the *Passio Sereni* the matron is set against the elderly Syneros. Susannah and her maidservants are spotted by the elders in the garden, just as Syneros spots the matron in his garden. The ensuing conflict revolves around sexual promiscuity: In Susannah's case, that of the elders; in the matron's case, her own adultery creates trouble. During her trial, Susannah remains silent – in Syneros' trial, the matron is equally silent, being represented by her husband. However, the similarities that contrast the matron and Susannah, on one hand, and Syneros and the elders, on the other hand, end here. Gender inversions lead to the matron assuming the characteristics and role of the elders. Syneros, in turn, parallels the virtuous conduct of Susannah.

In the biblical story, Susannah is portrayed as chaste, modest, and faithful. In contrast, the elders are voyeuristic, vicious, intent on forcing Susannah to commit sin. When their attempt is unreciprocated, they plan to take revenge by unjustly accusing her. In the *Passio Sereni*, this is reversed: Syneros assumes the virtue of Susannah, being characterised as a most holy man, morally upright and authoritative. He refuses to become even an accessory to a possible adulterous act. By driving the matron out, he prevents the hypothetical sin to be committed. In this, he acts as the elders were supposed to act when they spotted Susannah. The matron is clothed in the immorality and lecherousness of the elders. She is not only sexually promiscuous, but also vengeful when it becomes clear that she would not succeed in consummating her adulterous design. In this first moment, the matron becomes an anti-Susannah, since she is immodest and pursues her sexual quest in a foreign garden, whereas Susanna was chaste and was strolling in her own garden. Similarly, Syneros becomes the anti-type of the elders, since he is the moralizing factor, whereas the elders' immorality is manifest even in their act of spying on Susannah.



In the trial episode this gender inversion continues. Unjustly accused, both Susannah and Syneros behave with impeccable morality; eventually, both are acquitted of charges. Syneros' trial obviously continues, this time with a different charge: that of being a Christian. Yet, as far as the initial accusation is concerned, the husband learns the truth, which prompts him to drop the charges. Here the matron takes on the functionality of the elders, since she uses her influence and social position to obtain Syneros' prosecution in court. Correspondingly, Syneros assumes the function of Susannah, unjustly accused of a crime he did not commit (in this case,

*contumelia*⁶⁴), but in the end vindicated of that crime. The sinfulness of the elders and the matron is revealed in the end and they are publicly shamed. In the *Passio Sereni*, the husband, as his wife's representative, is the first target of this public shaming. The redactor created here an even more powerful image, since an entire elite family is subject to social derision on account of the matron's actions.

The narratological correspondences with the story of Susannah identified by Praet do not exhaust the array of Scriptural parallels in which chaste and immoral conducts are contrasted. As Nagy already observed, the couple of the abstinent Christian and the licentious woman echoes the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife.⁶⁵

Such interpretation is confirmed by other elements in the *Passio Sereni*: The social gulf between Potiphar's wife and Joseph finds a parallel in the difference between the aristocratic matron and Syneros. Just like the wife of Potiphar, the matron in the *Passio Sereni* is of outstanding social rank: Her husband moves in imperial circles. Both Potiphar's wife and the matron have a passionate disposition which moves them to attempted adultery. The act is not consumed of course because of the morally correct acts of Joseph and Syneros, respectively. Moreover, in the biblical story as well as in the *Passio Sereni*, the wife remains unnamed. Her identity is defined through the husband, Potiphar and the imperial guard, respectively. Both the matron and Potiphar's wife are forced to seek revenge through their husbands.

Syneros and Joseph also share some characteristics: They are both foreigners of humble origin. Syneros is portrayed as an immigrant, a plebeian wage-labourer.⁶⁶ Their faith in God instills strong moral principles to which they adhere in spite of adversities. The magistrate recognises Syneros as a Christian because of these very principles. Ultimately, both Serenus and Joseph are vindicated by God. Joseph, we are told, rose to be the right hand of the pharaoh; through his martyrdom, Syneros obtains the ultimate divine blessing. Syneros' vindication, thus, occurs paradoxically in his martyrdom, as he himself implies when stating that "nunc autem requirit me Dominus ut in aedificium suum me constituat."⁶⁷

As a hagiographic narrative, the *Passio Sereni* draws its models and contents from a wide spectrum of sources and, why not, even from real-life. In this respect, Levente Nagy has shown that the theme of garden and gardening was a commonplace in late antique Pannonian religious imagination: Several tomb frescoes dating from the second half of the fourth century depict garden scenes.⁶⁸ They were interpreted as metaphors of the garden of Paradise, where those buried in the respective tombs

⁶⁴ Cf. Smirnov-Brkić and Rizos, "Record E05830" (accessed 24.03.2021). Spite, cf. *ThesLL* 4:798, s.v. "contumelia," was a punishable offense.

⁶⁵ Nagy, "Ascetic Christianity," 99, with reference to Gn 39:7-23.

⁶⁶ *Pass. Sereni* 1.1: "Senerus peregrinus, Graecus ciuis;" "hortum colere coepit... eo quod aliam artem non nosset;" *Pass. Sereni* 3.2: "Senerus quidam plebeius hortulanus."

⁶⁷ *Pass. Sereni* 4.3.

⁶⁸ Nagy, *Pannóniai városok*, 66-67.

were thought to be resting. The impact of such imagery on the *Passio Sereni* and its Pannonian audience would have been powerful indeed. As *locus amoenus*, the garden stands in stark contrast with the sinful intentions of the matron.⁶⁹ The symbolism of the garden and the episode taking place there is even more complex. Its full potential is revealed when the text is considered as a hagiographic composition centred on the spiritual evolution of the martyr, which culminates in his confession and death. Another hagiographic garden-scene, written in the period when the *Passio Sereni* was composed, might be illuminating in this respect.

At the beginning of his *Vita Pauli*, Jerome dwells on a series of Egyptian martyrdoms, among which one is particularly relevant for our purpose. He narrates that a young man, whose name he does not mention, unflinchingly refused to offer sacrifice to pagan gods in spite of the many tortures his persecutors inflicted. The authorities, therefore, devised a new kind of torture. He was taken to a garden, amply described by Jerome as an edenic *locus amoenus*. Hands and feet bound, the young man was laid down on a bed of flowers next to a stream at the centre of the idyllic, paradisiacal vegetation. A *meretrix* was then introduced, who tried to coerce a sexual reaction from the young man, in order to cause him to commit sin. Needless to say, the martyr found a way to subdue his bodily passions (by biting his tongue). The attempt proved thus futile.⁷⁰

Sexuality is here presented as the ultimate trial of a Christian, whom Jerome views as inherently ascetic. Now, while Syneros was not himself subject to sexual provocation, the *Passio Sereni* makes clear that he would not tolerate sight or even knowledge of such deed. Were the matron successful in her adulterous intentions, the sin would have extended also on Syneros for tolerating its happening. No evidence suggests that the hagiographer was familiar with Jerome's description. However, both texts reflect the then widespread ethical-ascetic ideal of continence and of conquering temptations. In this, the *Passio Sereni* integrates well predominant concerns in the later fourth century.

The garden scene in the *Vita Pauli* and the *Passio Sereni* metaphorically reverses the fall narrative in Gn 1: The martyr becomes an anti-Adam, who resists the temptations of Eve – the *meretrix* in *Vita Pauli*, the immoral matron in the *Passio Sereni*, respectively. But it can be interpreted as a metaphorical transposition of the garden of Gethsemane as well, where Christ retreated before his passion. In an ascetic register, it translates the martyr's perfect conformity to the will of God, just as Christ declared his perfect conformity to the will of God in the garden of Gethsemane. In this sense, the garden signifies the martyr's spiritual development, his steadfast devotion to Christ; it is a metaphor of virtue and ascetic life. This hermeneutic register is the leading thread of the entire *Passio Sereni*.

⁶⁹ Nagy, "Ascetic Christianity," 99.

⁷⁰ Jerome, *Vita Pauli* 3 (ed. Leclerc, Morales and De Vogüé, 148-150).

3.2. Spiritual Development and Flight from Persecution

The introduction is meant to define Syneros as a holy man, an ascetic. That he knew only the art of gardening recalls the virtue of *simplicitas*, which the late antique holy man was expected to cultivate. The redactor insists on the fact that Syneros was a foreigner, a former wanderer⁷¹ who eventually settled down. This does not have negative connotations: Although it conveniently stresses the social differences between Syneros and the matron, it also sets the stage for Syneros' spiritual development. When he renounces wandering, and chooses to settle at Sirmium, Syneros engages on a path of spiritual progress. This is the milestone where the future martyr, torn by the wandering paths of this world, reaches the garden of God. His growth in faith and virtue can now begin. His inability to do anything else than cultivate a garden metaphorically represents his wholehearted dedication to the cultivation of Christian virtues and spiritual life.

Yet this dedication is not without tribulation. We are told that, when faced with persecution, Syneros went into hiding for some months. Nevertheless, he soon conquered the temptation of cowardice (that he feared physical pain),⁷² and returned to freely ("libere") cultivate his garden. Nothing in the text indicates that the cause for his free activity could be the fading of the persecution. On the contrary, Syneros' attitude at the beginning is markedly different from his conduct after return, when he obliterates social deference and rebukes the matron. By this point, we are to understand that he had fully embraced his Christian identity with any consequences it might lead to. This dedication empowers him to take enormous social liberties and represent authoritatively the true way of life – i.e., Christian morality. Syneros is portrayed now as the peak of outspoken virtuousness, to which he committed himself by returning to his garden. The redactor likewise insists on Syneros' boldness during the two stages of his trial: To the charge of *contumelia* he answers "sine aliqua trepidatione,"⁷³ he admits to being a Christian "sine aliqua mora."⁷⁴ His initial apprehension is replaced with *parrhesia*, bold speech.

The cornerstone metaphor from Serenus' confession adds a new dimension to his hiding. The martyr refers to his near-lapse when he claims: "Eram autem sicut lapis proiectus ab aedificio." But then he adds: "nunc autem requirit me Dominus ut in aedificium suum me constituat."⁷⁵ From the many scriptural parallels to this passage,

⁷¹ *Pass. Sereni* 1.1: "Senerus peregrinus ... de locis peregrinis uenisset." I understand "peregrinus" to signify not just "foreigner," but also "wanderer," cf. *ThesLL* 10/1: 1312-1313, s.v. "peregrinus, B2."

⁷² *Pass. Sereni* 1.2: "latitauit non multum tempus et paucis mensibus."

⁷³ *Pass. Sereni* 3.7.

⁷⁴ *Pass. Sereni* 3.8 and 4.2, respectively.

⁷⁵ *Pass. Sereni* 4.3.

the connection with Jesus' address to Peter in Mt 16:17-18⁷⁶ is particularly suggestive. Just as Peter had once fearfully denied Christ, but became the foundation rock of the Church, so too Syneros, once a coward, is now transformed into a cornerstone. Relevant here is the emphasis placed on God: It is God who wants Syneros in his building. By the public declaration of his Christianity, Syneros in fact does the will of God. This reveals also that Syneros' newfound courage, his free cultivation of the garden are signs of the vocation God granted him, of the call to spiritual development and the summit of martyrdom.

Likewise, the right moment for martyrdom ("nunc"⁷⁷) is also chosen by God. The *Passio Sereni* implies that martyrdom is a grace of God, and its occasion a providentially foreordained *kairos*. The martyr is bound to wait for that *kairos*, even if it means he / she should go into hiding until the time comes. In this respect, the *Passio Sereni* enacts the same attitude expressed in the *Passio Quirini*. Asked why he attempted to escape his arrest, Quirinus explains: "Non fugiebam, sed iussum Domini mei faciebam. Scriptum nobis est: *Si uos persequentur in una ciuitate, fugite in aliam.*" He then continues: "Semper nobiscum est, et ubi fuerimus Dominus quem colimus subuenire potest. Et modo cum apprehensus essem mecum erat, et hic mecum est confortans me, et ipse de meo ore tibi respondet."⁷⁸ The same idea of God electing and guiding the Christian towards martyrdom is discernible in both texts.

I already addressed the topic of legitimate flight from persecution in the chapter relative to Quirinus.⁷⁹ Suffice to repeat here that even the martyr-acts considered authentic (*Martyrium Polycarpi*, *Martyrium Agapis*, *Eirenis et Chionis*, etc.) "prescribe" it as an advisable course of action during persecution, following the Scriptural advice in Mt 10:23, "So when they persecute you in one town, flee to the next." Yet flight from persecution was acceptable only on condition that, if and when caught, the Christian who had attempted to escape eventually confessed his faith and underwent martyrdom. Flight in this sense is intrinsically linked to the kairological view on martyrdom: This tactic is adopted by martyrs-to-be in sign of their expectation for the right moment to arrive. In many cases, the right moment is revealed by God.⁸⁰ Conon himself is reported to have sung before his death the lines of Ps. 40:1-2, "I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry."⁸¹ Precisely because it is a grace of God, martyrdom must not be sought actively; but if and when it comes, it should be embraced eagerly.

⁷⁶ Mt 16:17-18 (Biblia Sacra Vulgata): "Respondens autem Jesus, dixit ei: Beatus es Simon Bar Jona: quia caro et sanguis non revelavit tibi, sed Pater meus, qui in caelis est. Et ego dico tibi, quia tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevallebunt adversus eam."

⁷⁷ *Pass. Sereni* 4.3: "nunc autem requirit me."

⁷⁸ *Pass. Quir.* II.3.5.

⁷⁹ See section I.3.1 above.

⁸⁰ E.g., *Mart. Polycarpi* 5 (ed. Musurillo, 6.3-6).

⁸¹ *Mart. Cononis* 6.2 (ed. Musurillo, 190.31-33).

The theology of martyrdom expressed by the *Passio Sereni* conforms to “mainstream” expectations. By God’s providential assistance, Syneros passes through all stages of spiritual development: From *peregrinus* to virtuous and ascetically inclined Christian, then to authoritative teacher of Christian morality and integrity. Finally, his martyrdom crowns this development with a suitable reward.

3.3. *Passio Sereni* and Pannonian Christian Identity

As I hope to have shown, the *Passio Sereni* is a complex text, with many layers of significance. It blends in a refined way Scriptural and hagiographic associations, building on the familiarity of Pannonian audiences with garden and gardening imagery. Without explicating its far-reaching implications, the *Passio* engages the intellectual and associative capacities of its reader / hearer in bringing them to the fore. The interpretive potential of the garden scene can be linked with the biblical stories of Susannah and Joseph, it can be identified with the garden of Paradise or Gethsemane, but it can also be understood as a metaphor for spiritual development and ascetic ethos. Syneros is presented as a holy man on the path to spiritual perfection, which culminates in his martyrdom. The martyrdom itself is the perfect conforming of Syneros’ will to the will of God. It occurs at the right, foreordained moment.

Through this text the late antique hagiographer offers a normative discourse on Christian morality. Syneros is an *exemplum* whom all Christians should imitate, both in their own conduct and in rebuking those who were led astray. Syneros’ words and actions call the audience to observe rigorously the Christian ethical code. The promised reward is salvation, just as Syneros received eternal life through his martyrdom. The *Passio Sereni* commends in particular sexual continence and, by extension, an ascetic lifestyle devoted to communion with God. In that, this narrative fits well into the hagiographic programme of late antique Pannonia. Like the *Passio Irenaei*, it advocates renunciation of the world in favor of a life dedicated to God. Like the *Passio Pollionis*, it reflects in an indirect way on the issues of sexual *integritas* and a manifestly Christian lifestyle.⁸² In that, it employs the same strategies: Syneros’ rebuke would have been entirely acceptable to a non-Christian audience, since the Roman moral code, too, expected married women to behave with modesty and fidelity. The message is that Christianity brings to fulfilment the best of Roman morality, having thereby an exhortative, missionary character as well.

Together with other Pannonian hagiographies, the *Passio Sereni* contrives to outline ascetic tendencies and ethical concerns in late antique Pannonian Christianity, but also to present Christianity as an attractive option for non-Christians.

⁸² The complementarity of the two hagiographies has been outlined by Nagy, “Ascetic Christianity,” 98-104; and Smirnov-Brkić and Rizos, “Record E05830” (accessed 24.03.2021).

CHAPTER V

Donatus, Venustus, Hermogenes and Companions (BHL 2309)¹

1. HAGIOGRAPHIC DOSSIER

The cult of this group of martyrs is not attested by late antique historical or archaeological evidence. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* mentions only Donatus. This is the only reference to members of the group in martyrological sources. It seems that even the memory of Donatus faded relatively soon. But then the hagiography of Donatus, this time with a number of companions, miraculously re-emerged in the tenth century in an unexpected place, Cividale del Friuli (Italy). Starting with the middle of the fourteenth century, Donatus is attested as the patron saint of Cividale.²

There are only three sources on which one can rely in order to constitute the hagiographic dossier of Donatus and companions: the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, and the comparison with the hagiography of Hermagoras. The latter is the more intricate, since tradition holds that Hermagoras was the first bishop of Aquileia, ordained by saint Peter in Rome, and later martyred.

The relationship between the hagiography of Hermogenes (i.e., in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*) and that of the famous Hermagoras generated ample debate. A number of scholars were of the opinion that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* predated the *Passio Hermachorae et Fortunati* (BHL 3838-3844), and suggested that Hermogenes provided the model for Hermagoras. This hypothesis, first proposed by Svetozar Ritig, then taken over by Jacques Zeiller and Rudolf Egger,³ continues to be disputed by the majority of Italian researchers. They, in turn, argue that this theory is based on meagre and ambiguous evidence, which makes the reverse possible too: That the martyr Hermogenes was “invented” from the traditions referring to Hermagoras.⁴

¹ This chapter assumes as starting point the arguments set out in Tamas, “*Scio unum Deum*,” 243-258.

² Marianna Cerno, “*Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*,” in *Le Passioni dei martiri Aquileiesi e Istriani*, ed. Emanuela Colombi, vol. 1., *Fonti per la Storia della Chiesa in Friuli. Serie medievale 7* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2008), 352n42. To the sources cited there one might add Cividale del Friuli UD, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Archivi e Biblioteca, Cod. XI, dedication to Donatus in the preface and on f. 3r-5r.

³ Ritig, “*Martirologij*,” 353-61; Zeiller, *Les origines*, 76-8; Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 20-3 and 58-9. Egger’s conclusions have been accepted, among others, by Tóth, “*Sirmian Martyrs*,” 156-7, and more cautiously by Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 69.

⁴ See Pio Paschini, “*Le fasi di una leggenda aquileiese*,” *RSCI* 8 (1954): 162-167, 183; Enrico Marcon, *Sant’Ermagora protovescovo e martire* (Gorizia: n.p., 1958), 7-8; Giuseppe Cuscito, *Cristianesimo antico*

Below I present an outline of scholarly positions on this subject, paying special attention to the observations made by the editor of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, Marianna Cerno. I also formulate a tentative opinion on the date and function of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. Against Cerno's view that the hagiographic dossier of Donatus and companions developed late, well into the Middle Ages, I argue that it should be situated towards the end of Late Antiquity. Nonetheless, I should like to mention here that this opinion, albeit a legitimate possibility, remains tentative. Given that we have so few sources to work with, scholarly hypotheses can only aim to explain what *might have* happened, but certainly cannot elucidate what *actually* happened. In this sense, the hagiography of Donatus and companions remains very much and unsolvable problem.

Since the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is the main point of reference in this dossier, I shall begin my overview of the hagiographic dossier with this source.

1.1. *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*

The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* narrates the martyrdom of five clerics who suffered in Pannonia Secunda during the Great Persecution. The first victim was the deacon Donatus from Singidunum, tried and condemned to death by the *praeses* Victorianus. Next, we are informed that two other local clergymen were also martyred, after which Victorianus moved on to Cibalae. Here, Donatus' brother, Venustus, was similarly tried and executed. Finally, the *lector* Hermogenes was arrested. During his trial, he expelled a demon first from a statue, and later from the persecutor's daughter. However, the miracle was not enough to convince Victorianus, as he condemned Hermogenes too. The epilogue informs us that the three protagonists, Donatus, Venustus, and Hermogenes were executed purportedly on the same day, the 21st of August.

Before Marianna Cerno published the first comprehensive critical edition of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*,⁵ the group of martyrs was thought to include Romulus and Silvanus (the two clergymen martyred after Donatus at Sirmium). This raised the number of the group to five: Donatus, Venustus, Romulus, Silvanus, and

ad Aquileia e in Istria, *Fonti e studi per la storia della Venezia Giulia* 2/3 (Trieste: Deputazione di storia patria per la Venezia Giulia, 1977), 22n11 and 70n20. In a subsequent monograph the same author relegates the Hermagoras – Hermogenes problem to a single footnote where he expresses his adherence to Paschini's critique in the above-mentioned study: Giuseppe Cuscito, *Martiri cristiani ad Aquileia e in Istria: Documenti archeologici e questioni agiografiche* (Udine: Del Bianco Editore, 1992), 21n8. The problem has been revisited more recently by Rajko Bratož in several studies: If in "Il cristianesimo," 22 he defended the Pannonian model, already in "Die kirchenpolitischen und kulturhistorischen Beziehungen zwischen Sirmium und Aquileia," *Balkanica* 18-19 (1987-1988): 174, he expressed doubts with regard to its historical accuracy, and, in a lengthy analysis included in *Il cristianesimo*, 68-83, he maintained that such allegation is purely the effort of modern hagiology to supplement the lack of clarifying evidence.

⁵ Cerno, "Passio Donati," 362-366.

Hermogenes, complicating even more the attempts to sort out the elements of the hagiographic dossier.

For now, let us retain the relevant data offered by the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* in this sense: According to the *passio*, the martyrdoms took place on the 21st of August – a singular occurrence, since none of the notes of the *Hieronymianum* below corresponds to this date. The *passio* indicates that Donatus died at Sirmium, whereas Venustus and Hermogenes in Cibalae. This, however, should be received with caution even at first sight. In fact, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is a calque on the Pannonian *Passio Pollionis*, as I shall explain below.⁶ The only information verified by late antique martyrological sources is Donatus' martyrdom at Sirmium – and only by the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. On this basis, we can retain Donatus' Pannonian origin ascertained.

1.2. *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*

Except for the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, there is no record of Hermogenes, Venustus, Romulus and Silvanus as martyrs from the Middle Danube region. The *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* places only Donatus in Pannonia, notably amongst a group of martyrs celebrated at Sirmium:

ad 9 apr.: Syrmium Fortunati, Donati et VII. uirginum canonicarum⁷

The absence of Hermogenes, Venustus, Romulus and Silvanus from the catalogue of Pannonian martyrs is at least curious given the interest shown by the *Hieronymianum* to the region.⁸ One suspects, therefore, that the group as such was constituted elsewhere and that names celebrated in other regions were added to it. And surely, the *Hieronymianum* mentions several times the other martyrs of this group. From amongst the various places and dates, the region of *Venetia et Histria* in Northern Italy stands out. Thus, Hermogenes is connected to Aquileia:

ad 23 aug.: In Aquileia sanctorum Fortunati Hermogenis...⁹

A confrontation with the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* results in two observations with significant impact on the interpretation of this last note. In both instances of the *Hieronymianum*, Donatus, respectively Hermogenes are associated with the martyr Fortunatus. In both notes Fortunatus takes precedence: We may

⁶ See section V.2.1 below.

⁷ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 9 apr. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 41): Eptern. *Firmionis Furtunati et VII. uirginum canonicorum*; Rich. *In Syrmia...Furtunati et uirginum septem*; Wissenb. *Syrmi... Furtunati, Donati et natale VII uirginum canonicarum*. See also Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 180.

⁸ All surviving hagiographies referring to Pannonian martyrs have their protagonists mentioned in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. Cf. Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 212-25.

⁹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 23 aug. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 109): Eptern. *in Aquileia natale Furtunati Ermodori...*; L. M. V. *Hermonis*.

consider him the more important of the pair. Yet Fortunatus is conspicuously absent from the *passio*.

Commenting on the *Hieronymianum*'s note on the 23rd of August, Hippolyte Delehayé interpreted *Hermogenis* as a corrupted version of Hermagoras. Consequently, he proposed to read: "In Aquileia Furtunati et Hermagorae."¹⁰ However, in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* the story of the latter martyr dominates the narrative. The redactor relegated the martyrdom of Donatus, Venustus, Romulus, and Silvanus to the introduction, and amply narrated the arrest, trial and death of Hermogenes, as well as the miraculous deeds he performed before his martyrdom. As this is the only occurrence of Hermogenes in late antique martyrologies, it seems probable that the redactor of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* found the name either in this entry of the *Hieronymianum* or in some other local calendar. If so, there is no reason to correct "Hermogenis" into "Hermagorae."

The *Hieronymianum* contains another interesting note on the 17th of February, which mentions Donatus, Romulus and Silvanus:

ad 17 feb.: In Africa ciuitate Concordiae passio sanctorum Donati Secundiani. Aquileia Crisantiani Eotici. Item Concordiae Iustae Alibi Romuli Saloni Saluani et aliorum LXXXIII quorum nomina Deus scit.¹¹

The location, Concordia, is rather difficult to determine. It might be either in Africa or in Italy, or both: As Valeria Mattaloni showed, this and the note of the following day, the 18th of February, is one of the characteristic confusions of the *Hieronymianum*. Martyrs celebrated in Africa and Concordia were thrown together haphazardly in the course of the elaboration and transmission of this martyrology.¹²

Zeiller and Egger claimed that the *Hieronymianum* referred here to the group from the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, concluding that the entire group was also celebrated in Concordia.¹³ Furthermore, Egger, who considered that the *passio* transmitted historical information, proposed that Romulus and Silvanus in the list above also had Pannonian background.¹⁴ Accordingly, he extended the list of Pannonian martyrs so as to include Donatus, Romulus and Silvanus on the 9th of April, and Venustus and Hermogenes either on the 9th of April or slightly later.

¹⁰ Delehayé, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 459.

¹¹ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 17 feb. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 22): Eptern. ...*passio sanctorum Donati Secundiani Aquileia Crisantiani Eutici Concordiae Iustae...*; Rich. *Aquileia ciuitate Concordia Donati, Secundiani et Iusti. Alibi Romuli, Saloni, Siluani cum aliis LXXXIII*; Wissenb. in *Africa ciuitate Concorde passio sanctoum Donati Secundiani. In Aquileia Crisantiani Eutici Concordiae Iustae Romuli*. See also Delehayé, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 102.

¹² Valeria Mattaloni, "Passio Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII," in *Le Passioni dei martiri Aquileiesi e Istriani*, ed. Emanuela Colombi, vol. 2/1, Fonti per la Storia della Chiesa in Friuli – Istituto Pio Paschini. Serie medievale 14 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2013), 677-678.

¹³ Zeiller, *Les origines*, 76; Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 53.

¹⁴ Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 50.

At the opposite end, Pio Paschini claimed that the group of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was invented and the martyrs should be identified with the group celebrated in Concordia. Paschini reversed the stakes: In his view, the historical martyrs were those of Concordia – and the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, a fictional hagiography that borrowed their names.¹⁵

But, as with Syneros in the previous chapter, here too the transmission history of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* solved at least one puzzle: The names of Romulus and Silvanus were not part of the archetype. Instead, they were added at a later date, probably from the *Passio Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII*, dedicated precisely to the group celebrated in Concordia on the 17th of February.¹⁶ The tangle can be disentangled thus:

Martyrs honoured in Africa and in Concordia were associated in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*. It is possible that their origin was altogether in Africa. Venustus was probably included, too. At some point a *passio* was composed in Concordia in their honour: the *Passio Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII*. Their cult was popular also in Milan, where they were celebrated, according to the *Hieronymianum*, on the 6th of May.¹⁷ The cult of Hermogenes and Venustus can also be localised to the region of Aquileia and neighbouring cities (Concordia), which suggests that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was composed in this setting. At some point in medieval Cividale del Friuli, a copyist of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, puzzled by the fact that two of its martyrs should remain nameless, supplemented the names of Romulus and Silvanus, which he had found in the *Passio Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII*. His inspiration must have been informed by the homonymity between the two Donati, but the proximity of Concordia to Aquileia and Cividale del Friuli probably contributed too.

1.3. Concluding Observations on the Hagiographic Dossier

If the overview above dismissed two names from the group as later interpolations (Romulus and Silvanus), it left unanswered questions related to the other three names, to the date and the location of their martyrdom and / or cult. The *Hieronymianum* transmits the 9th of April for Donatus and the 23rd of August for Hermogenes. In the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, all three martyrs are said to have died on the 21st of August. In the *Hieronymianum* Donatus is placed at Sirmium, Hermogenes in Aquileia. The local, focused, transmission of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* in the region of Friuli also concurs with placing the cult in the

¹⁵ Pio Paschini, *La chiesa aquileiese ed il periodo delle origini* (Udine: Tipografia del Patronato, 1909), 66.

¹⁶ Cerno, "Passio Donati," 355. The critical edition of the *Passio Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII* can be found in Mattaloni, "Passio Donati," 708-714.

¹⁷ *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* ad 6 mai. (ed. De Rossi and Duchesne, 55); Delehaye, *Commentarius perpetuus*, 232-234.

surroundings of Aquileia. How did, then, Donatus of Sirmium end up in Aquileia and how did his hagiography develop into the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*?

The hypothesis that makes most sense is that at some point in history, relics were taken from Pannonia to Aquileia, amongst them relics attributed to Donatus. Such an event is hardly surprising, since we have seen in previous chapters a steady flow of relics travelling out of Pannonia, taken by refugees who fled the barbarian raids. It is not unlikely that most of the relics taken to Italy had stopped in Aquileia, whose close relationship with Sirmium brought about the flourishing of several cults of Pannonian saints in local piety.¹⁸

The link that gives this hypothesis further substance is Fortunatus. In the *Hieronymianum* Fortunatus accompanies both Donatus on the 9th of April at Sirmium and Hermogenes on the 23rd of August in Aquileia. Assuming that the notes refer to the same Fortunatus, his relics must have accompanied those of Donatus.¹⁹ Based on this, the 9th of April would commemorate the date of Fortunatus' and Donatus' martyrdom, whereas the 23rd of August would preserve some memory of the translation / deposition in Aquileia.²⁰ Hermogenes was introduced to the group in Aquileia, since the *Hieronymianum* mentions him only there. Still in Aquileia, the memory of Fortunatus as a Pannonian martyr faded. The Adriatic city boasted, in fact, another Fortunatus, whose tradition and prestige was by that time firmly established. The two namesakes were soon assimilated to the benefit of the local martyr.²¹

At some point after these events, a redactor composed the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, in Aquileia or its confines.²² He obviously assumed that Donatus and Hermogenes were Pannonian martyrs, but knowing nothing else of their story, he appealed to another Pannonian hagiography to frame his narration. By this time the Pannonian Fortunatus was forgotten, so the redactor did not include him amongst the protagonists of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.²³

Scholars proposed various dates for the relic transfer from Pannonia to Aquileia: Egger,²⁴ followed by Bratož,²⁵ deemed the transfer was occasioned by Ataulf's incursion in Northern Italy in 409/410 A.D. As mentioned above, Egger assumed that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was written before the *Passio Hermachorae et Fortunati*, and that the hagiographic tradition of Hermagoras emerged from the cult of the Pannonian Hermogenes. The *Passio Hermachorae et*

¹⁸ Especially as Aquileia was situated on the main land-paths that connected the North of Italy to the Danubian provinces (the roads Aquileia-Carnuntum and Aquileia-Sirmium). For the ecclesiastical and cultural relations between the Adriatic city and Sirmium, see Bratož, "Die kirchenpolitischen und kulturhistorischen Beziehungen," 151-176.

¹⁹ Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 53; Jarak, "Martyres," 273; and Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 216-7.

²⁰ Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 49 and 50; Jarak, "Martyres," 273; Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 217; Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 69.

²¹ Bratož, "La Chiesa," 133.

²² Jarak, "Martyres," 273; Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 217.

²³ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 69.

²⁴ Egger, *Der heilige Hermagoras*, 58-9.

²⁵ Bratož, "Verzeichnis," 217; Bratož, "La Chiesa," 133-134.

Fortunatis mentions Ataulf, and so Egger claimed that this information was also borrowed from the hagiography of Hermogenes. Albeit in a distorted form, it would refer to the historical event of Pannonian relics being brought to Aquileia by immigrants coming with or shortly after Ataulf's invasion. In Aquileia, their cult was progressively appropriated. By the middle of the fifth century, the martyrs were claimed as local,²⁶ resulting in the inclusion of (or addition of an otherwise unknown) Hermogenes in the *Hieronymianum* as Aquileian martyr. When the Patriarchate of Aquileia transferred its see to Cividale, the relics were also taken there, and the cult began to flourish anew.

Italian scholars in general disputed this opinion. Their partiality to a very late transfer of relics is connected to the attempt to vindicate the chronological precedence of saint Hermagoras. According to Paschini, it was rather unlikely that relics safeguarded from the barbarian invasions in Illyricum have found shelter in Aquileia, since that city was endangered too.²⁷ One might object to this that a (however short-lived) cult could have taken roots in a given place without the permanent deposition of relics. As Pollio's cult in Ravenna and Quirinus' cult in Aquileia / Grado prove, a temporary station was enough to impress a martyr in the collective memory of a community.²⁸

Cerno, who curated the first critical edition of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, advanced the tenth century as the date of the relic transfer. She cited a note remarked upon already by Paschini and Claudio Mattaloni,²⁹ according to which it was Fredericus, the then Patriarch of Aquileia, who commissioned the transfer of relics.³⁰ At the time, the capital of the patriarchate was Cividale del Friuli. Fredericus had conducted successful campaigns in the Hungarian kingdom, on the territory of ancient Pannonia, and thought to celebrate his victory by importing the cult of Pannonian martyrs. Given that a tenth-century chapel had been dedicated to Donatus in Cividale, it can be inferred that the relics taken from Hungary were at least in part those of Donatus.³¹ Cerno consequently established the composition date of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* to the tenth century or shortly thereafter.³²

Of this note, however, nothing is certain. Being of questionable reliability, it remains ignored by most scholars. Such a late date is contradicted, moreover, by a number of facts.

²⁶ Bratož, "La Chiesa," 133, grounds his remark on the fact that the *Hieronymianum* mentions the martyrs of this group in Aquileia or its surroundings.

²⁷ Paschini, "Le fasi," 181.

²⁸ Bratož, "La Chiesa," 131-133.

²⁹ Paschini, *La chiesa*, 65-66; Claudio Mattaloni, "Gli altari del duomo di Cividale, con revisione di attribuzioni, paternità e datazioni (Altare maggiore, Ss. Sacramento, S. Donato)," *Ce fastu?* 78, no. 2 (2002): 266-281.

³⁰ Cerno, "Passio Donati," 351-353.

³¹ Cerno, "Passio Donati," 353n43, citing C. Mattaloni, "Il palio di S. Donato a Cividale del Friuli," *Forum Iulii* 26 (2002): 149-150.

³² Cerno, "Passio Donati," 354; Marianna Cerno, "Riflessi di conflitti politici e teologici in alcuni esempi di letteratura martiriale di area aquileiese," *AS Es* 27, no. 1 (2010): 181.

Assuming that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was written to provide the new cult with a foundational story,³³ its focus on Hermogenes instead of Donatus is at least puzzling. In the *passio* Donatus' martyrdom is dispatched in barely a few sentences, as is the martyrdom of Venustus (chapters I and II, respectively). The bulk of the text (chapters III-VI) is dedicated to the story of Hermogenes. Judging from the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, one would expect Hermogenes to take precedence. But Cividale sources attest only the cult of Donatus. If, however, Donatus and Hermogenes had already been associated in a cult, this might explain the emphasis placed on Hermogenes. The composition of the *passio* and Donatus' rise to the patronage of Cividale should then be viewed as two separate events.

As remarked above, the *Hieronymianum*'s note on Hermogenes leads to believe that the association of Hermogenes and Donatus must have taken place in Aquileia. This same note also suggests that Hermogenes, at least, had an established cult in Aquileia already in the fifth – sixth centuries. But there are no further indications that Hermogenes' cult survived into the Middle Ages. A sudden rise in popularity in the tenth century so as to warrant the composition of a *passio* dedicated to him seems unlikely. The only plausible option then is to assume that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was composed to assist the cult of Donatus and Hermogenes in Aquileia. From there it passed into the annals of Cividale del Friuli when the patriarchate was transferred there.

I concur, therefore, with scholarly pronouncements on an earlier relic transfer. Whether this happened in ca 409-410 AD, as Egger and Bratož suppose, is less certain. At any rate, it must predate the earliest layers of the *Hieronymianum*. Thus, we can tentatively date it to the fifth century: A century that offered ample incentives for Pannonian inhabitants to flee and take the vestiges of their martyrs along.

³³ As suggested by Cerno, "Riflessi," 181.

2. PASSIO DONATI, VENUSTI ET HERMOGENIS

The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* attracted little scholarly attention. Even so, historical and later text-critical considerations overshadowed the study of its narrative value, its theological potential, or its function in the Christian cultic dynamics. In general, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was studied from the perspective of the relationship it had with the *Passio Hermachorae et Fortunati*, or from the perspective of the historicity of events and / or persons. A shift occurred only in the last decade: In an article published in 2010, Marianna Cerno conducted a comparative analysis to reveal the redactorial innovations of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* with respect to its model, the *Passio Pollionis*, and their significance;³⁴ whereas my 2013 article tackled the doctrinal content that transpires from the narrative. In the following section, I revisit some of the questions addressed in the hagiographic dossier, but this time with a focus on the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, its date and place, its models.

2.1. Relationship with the *Passio Pollionis*: Historical Reliability; Date of Composition

This text is without question historically unreliable.³⁵ That we are faced with hagiographic forgery is suggested by several textual elements, content-wise and at the level of presentation. The compositional structure already confirms such suspicion. Albeit of smaller proportions, the *Passio* resembles the great hagiographic legends bringing together several independent narratives connected by a key-figure or by geographic proximity.³⁶ Names and dates are inconsistent with martyrological sources. Historically speaking, the *praeses* Victorianus is also an invention of the redactor. No other source mentions a Victorianus *praeses* in Pannonia.³⁷ The redactor would have Diocletian send him specially to persecute Christians “in partibus Sirmiensibus.” Victorianus’ persecuting zeal, as presented in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* hovers on the limits of the absurd: We are told that in a very short period of time, he tried and sentenced at least three Christians at Sirmium, and

³⁴ See Cerno, “Riflessi,” 182-183.

³⁵ Although Jarak, “Martyres,” 273, still maintains that the simplicity of the account points to its historical accuracy.

³⁶ A very good example is the *Passio Anastasiae*, which also circulated in Aquileia. Paschini, “Le fasi,” 168, asserts that the Christians of Aquileia were familiar with the Sirmian saint Anastasia, whose Roman legend they used also to gain knowledge about Chrysogonus, a martyr venerated in Aquileia.

³⁷ Acknowledging this lack of sources, Bratož, “Die diokletianische Christenverfolgung,” 134, proposes a hypothetical date April 304 for his time of office.

two other Christians in Cibalae. The conclusion of the *passio* goes even further, and states that all these martyrdoms took place on the same day!

Most importantly for our purpose here, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is grafted on two hagiographic models: On one hand, the *Passio Pollionis*;³⁸ on the other hand, the *Passio Hermachorae et Fortunati*. With the latter it shares a series of stock-motifs, which I shall not address here. The similarities with the hagiography of Pollio extend to narrative – structural similarities and content-wise borrowings.

The first are clearly discernible: The entire narrative of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is grafted on the *Passio Pollionis*. In both texts the persecution is scheduled to begin with clerics. In both cases the first martyr is a clergyman from Singidunum, who, strictly speaking, was not under the jurisdiction of the *praeses Pannoniae Inferioris*. Finally, in both documents, after finishing off the clergy in Sirmium, the governor heads for Cibalae, where a *lector* becomes his final victim. Pollio himself is mentioned in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*: In one of the passages borrowed from the *Passio Pollionis*, the redactor substituted the name of Valentinian with Pollio, and rendered “Valentinianus christianissimus imperator” from the *Passio Pollionis* as “Pullio uir christianissimus.”

Content-wise, passages are taken over almost to the letter. The redactor also borrowed all information relative to geographical setting and ecclesiastical offices:

Pass. Poll. (ed. Tamas)

I. Diocletianus et Maximianus regnantes decreuerunt ut, immissa persecutione, omnes christianos ... **a fide facerent deuiare.**

(...)

2. Probus praeses ... **a clericis sumpsit exordium;** et comprehensum sanctum Montanum, presbyterum ecclesiae Singidunensis diuque christianae fidei uiribus conluctantem, misit in fluuium.

3. Episcopum quoque Irenaeum Sirmiensi ecclesiae pro fide et commissae sibi plebis constantia fortiter dimicantem ad caelestem palmam simili sententia cognitor prouexit immitis.

4. Etiam sanctum Demetrium, eiusdem ecclesiae diaconum, renuntiantem idolis et impia praecepta contempnentem, uario

Pass. Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis (ed. Cerno)

I. In diebus illis **regnantibus**

Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus decreuerunt ut immensis persecutionibus Christianos ... **a fide Christi facerent deuiare**

(...)

2. Victorianus praeses ... **a clericis sumpsit exordium. Adprehensum sanctum Donatum diaconum ecclesiae Singidunensis diuque christianae fidei pro uiribus colluctantem misit in carcerem...**

II. Presbyterum **quoque Sirmiensi ecclesiae** qui ... **pro fidei constantia et commissae sibi plebe fortiter dimicabat ad caelestem palmam simili sententia** praedictus prouexit immitis.

2. Item et alium **diaconum sanctum eiusdem ecclesiae, idolis renuntiantem et impia praecepta contempnentem per uaria**

³⁸ Ritig, “Martirologij,” 354-5 and Zeiller, *Les origines*, 76.

**tormentorum genere confectum
temporali morti tradidit in aeternitate
uicturum.**

II. **Sed, cum in his eius satiata
crudelitas non fuisset, uicinas
peragrandas esse credidit ciuitates.** 2. Et
**cum sub specie publicae necessitatis
ad urbem Cibalitanam peruenisset, de
qua** Valentinianus, **christianissimus**
imperator, oriundus **esse cognoscitur** ... 3.
contigit Domini misericordia providente
ut eodem die comprehensus Pullio...

(...)

III. 2. Probus dixit: **"Quod
officium geris?"** Beatus
Pullio respondit: **"Primicerius lectorum"**.
Probus dixit: **"Quorum lectorum?"**
Beatus Pullio respondit: **"Qui eloquia
diuina populis legere consueuerunt"**

(...)

5. Probus praeses dixit: **"Quae mandata
legendo, uel cuius regis?"**
Beatus Pullio respondit:
"Christi regis pia et sancta mandata."

(...)

6. ... non posse dici deos **ligna et lapides**

**tormentorum genera confectum
temporali morte tradidit in aeternitate
uicturum.**

3. **Sed, cum in eis eius satiata
crudelitas non fuisset, uicinas
ciuitates peragrandas decreuit et
cum sub specie publicae necessitatis
in ciuitatem Cialitanam deuenisset, de
qua** Pullio, **uir christianissimus**
esse cognoscitur
contigit Domini misericordia
apprehensum esse sanctum Venustum...

(...)

III.3. Victorianus praeses dixit: **Quod
officium geris** Christi tui? Sanctus
Hermogenes dixit: **lectoris**.
Dixit ei praeses: uel **quorum lectorum?**
Beatus Hermogenes dixit: **qui** scientiam
populis legere consueuerunt.

Dixit ei praeses: **quae mandata**
legis, **uel cuius** salutis gaudia doces?
Sanctus Hermogenes dixit: Domino meo
Iesu **Christo regi** saeculorum **pia et
sancta mandata**.

(...)

5. ... Dii tui **lignei et lapidei** sunt

Several passages of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* (siglum PD below) included in the table above present an even greater resemblance to textual variants of the Cividale subfamily of the *Passio Pollionis* (siglum C).³⁹ Thus:

I.1 In diebus illis **regnantibus Diocletiano et Maximiano** PD

In diebus illis **Dioclitiano et Maximiano regnantibus** C

II.1 a fide Christi facerent deviare PD, C

II.2. pro fidei constantia et commissa sibi plebe PD, C

II.3. in eis eius satiata crudelitas PD, C

The Cividale manuscripts (C₁₁ and C₁₂)⁴⁰ belong to the third family of witnesses that transmit the *Passio Pollionis*. This family also includes the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*, copies of which share the above *lemmata*.⁴¹ It is possibile that the

³⁹ See the critical apparatus in Tamas, "Passio Pollionis," 27-29. Cerno also presents a comparative table that highlights the common elements between the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* and the Cividale version of the *Passio Pollionis* and its ActaSS edition, respectively. My edition of the *Passio Pollionis*, however, emended the ActaSS text in several places. Some of the readings Cerno thought characteristic to the Cividale branch are attested by other witnesses and go back to the archetype.

⁴⁰ C₁₁ = Cividale del Friuli UD, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Archivi e Biblioteca, Cod. XI, last quarter of the fourteenth century; C₁₂ = Cividale del Friuli UD, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Archivi e Biblioteca, Cod. XII, ca 1430-1440.

⁴¹ See Tamas, "Passio Pollionis," 20-23, and the critical apparatus at p. 27.

redactor of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* used a copy of the *Passio Pollionis* belonging to this family. Or, at some point, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was corrected from a third family hyparchetype of the *Passio Pollionis*, now lost.

The simpler solution would be to accept that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was composed from a Cividalese model of the *Passio Pollionis* – were it not for the dates of C₁₁ and C₁₂, much younger than the earliest copies of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. The hagiography of Pollio made its way into the legendaries of Cividale in the later part of the fourteenth century. By that time Donatus was firmly established as patron-saint. Moreover, Pollio's inclusion was rather incidental. C₁₁ contains material for the months of July and September, not for April, where the *Passio Pollionis* normally belonged. It appears exceptionally in C₁₁. C₁₂ does cover the month of April, but it did not contain initially the *Passio Pollionis*. A later hand copied it in the margins, perhaps by way of redressing what was perceived as an omission.⁴² This irregularity suggests that the *Passio Pollionis* was introduced in the legendary of Cividale because the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* mentioned Pollio by name.⁴³

A closer look at the transmission history of the *Passio Pollionis* is then needed. Given the correspondences above, the text on which the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was grafted must have contained at least some variants characteristic to the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum* – Cividale family of the *Passio Pollionis*. Internal variants of this family also suggest that C₁₁ was not copied after an extant witness of the Austrian legendary. C₁₁ shares a small number of significant variants with members of the other two families, variants which do not occur in the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum*. The archetype of C₁₁ (δ) must also be the archetype from which the model of the *Magnum Legendarium Austriacum* (γ) was copied.



The extant manuscripts of the Austrian legendary are dated from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, but γ could date from the end of the eleventh century. If so, δ must be even earlier, and must have circulated in the Austrian – Adriatic region. The close cultural and political ties that characterise this region throughout Late Antiquity but also the Middle Ages strengthen this hypothesis. Pollio and his hagiography were certainly known in Ravenna.⁴⁴ In light of all this, it is entirely possible that δ or an earlier version of the *Passio Pollionis* was used either to compose the *Passio Donati,*

⁴² Cf. Cesare Scalon and Laura Pani, *I codici della Biblioteca Capitolare di Cividale del Friuli* (Florence: Sismel, 1998), 109.

⁴³ Tamas, "Passio Pollionis," 22-23.

⁴⁴ Cf. section III.1.3 above.

Venusti et Hermogenis, or to correct potential variant readings in an existing version of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. These corrections were then transmitted to all the extant witnesses.

In conclusion, this hagiographic narrative was composed after relics belonging to a series of Pannonian martyrs had been transferred to Aquileia. There was some knowledge that relics of Donatus and possibly of Fortunatus were amongst them. In Aquileia Hermogenes was added to the group, perhaps even Venustus, and Fortunatus eliminated. The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was born, thus, out of the need to accommodate – or even popularize – the cult of Donatus' group in the region. For such a purpose, historical accuracy was less important. What mattered was to make from the martyrs models worthy of imitation.

Establishing the date of the translation is important because it coincides with the *terminus post quem* of the *passio*. I contend with Egger, Bratož, and others that the translation happened much earlier than the tenth century, in the tumultuous twilight of the later Roman empire. If not in 409/410 AD, in the course of the fifth century at least, when other Pannonian martyrs are documented in Aquileia. But before the *passio* took shape, sufficient time must have passed by so that the Pannonian Fortunatus could be forgotten. In view of these indications, the *passio* could have been indeed composed in the later fifth or the sixth century, as suggested by Kovács.⁴⁵

2.2. Published Editions and Translations

Joannes Pinius based the *editio princeps* of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* on a seventeenth century transcript he found in “breviaria vetustissima” sent to the Bollandists from Cividale.⁴⁶ He was unable to provide more details on the date of the Cividale breviary and his occasional difficulties in reading the transcript reflected on the quality of the text he published. Obviously, being a late and rather fictitious work, modern editors eschewed the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. The first critical edition appeared only in 2013, through the work of Marianna Cerno, who penned also the only translation of this text in a modern language (Italian).

Acta [SS. Donati, Romuli, Sylvani, Venusti et Hermogenis martyris], ed. Joannes Pinius, ActaSS Augusti, vol. 4 (Antwerp: Jacobus Meursius, 1739), 412-413.

Marianna Cerno, “Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis,” in *Le passioni dei martiri Aquileiesi e Istriani*, ed. by Emanuela Colombi, vol. 1, Fonti per la storia della Chiesa in Friuli – Istituto Pio Paschini. Serie medievale 7 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2008), 362-370.

Below I present the critical text established by Cerno. Accompanying it is the first English translation of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.

⁴⁵ Kovács, *Fontes Pannoniae*, 68, albeit without explaining why he established this date.

⁴⁶ Joannes Pinius, “De SS. Donato, Romulo, Sylvano, Venusto, et Hermogene martyre, Foro-Julii in Italia,” ActaSS Augusti, vol. 4 (Antwerp: Jacobus Meursius, 1739), 411.

Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis

- I. In diebus illis regnantibus Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus decreuerunt ut immensis persecutionibus christianos persequerentur de ciuitatibus eorum siue castellis qui essent qui diligenter Christo deseruirent, ut eos a fide Christi facerent deuiare. 2. Et ecce adueniens Victorianus praeses ex praecepto Diocletiani in
5 partibus Sirmiensibus ad christianos torquendos, ita a clericis sumpsit exordium. Adprehensum sanctum Donatum diaconum sanctae ecclesiae Singidunensis diuque christianae fidei pro uiribus colluctantem misit in carcerem.
3. Alia autem die primo diluculo exurgente dixit Victorianus praeses: "Donate, quis te persuasit, ut non colas deos nostros, sicut et nos et iudices nostri?"
10 Dixit ei sanctus Donatus: "Deos tuos surdos et mutos non colo. Colo autem Dominum meum Iesum Christum, *filium Dei uiui*, qui est uerus et omnipotens Deus."
4. Iratus autem Victorianus praeses dixit ei: "Recede ab hac stultitia."
Dixit ei beatus Donatus: "Stultus tu es uel iudices tui."
Audiens autem haec praeses furore accensus iussit eum apprehendi et iussit eum
15 capitalem subire sententiam.
- II. Presbyterum quoque Sirmiensis ecclesiae qui cum sancto Donato diacono et martyre Christi pro fidei constantia et commissa sibi plebe fortiter dimicabat ad caelestem palmam simili sententia praedictus prouexit immitis. 2. Item et alium diaconum sanctum eiusdem ecclesiae, idolis renuntiantem et impia praecepta
20 contemnentem per uaria tormentorum genera confectum temporali morte tradidit in aeternitate uicturum. 3. Sed cum in eis eius satiata crudelitas non fuisset, uicinas ciuitates peragrandas decreuit et cum sub specie publicae necessitatis in ciuitatem Cialitanam deuenisset, de qua Pullio uir christianissimus esse cognoscitur, contigit domini misericordia apprehensum esse sanctum Venustum, germanum sancti Donati
25 martyris, a ministris ipsius impiissimi Victoriani, et praecepit eum suis consisti apparitoribus;
4. qui dum intuitus eum fuisset, Victorianus praeses dixit: "Venuste, recordare quomodo germano tuo Donato caput feci amputari? Consule uel tu tibi, ueni et sacrificia diis nostris, quos et nos et principes nostri ueneramur, ne tibi similiter fieri
30 praecipiam."

10 surdos et mutos: cf. Dt 4:28 || 11 cf. Mt 16:16; Jn 11:27

1/7 cf. Pass. Poll. I.1-2 || 11 uerus ... Deus: Pass. Quir. II.4 || 12 recede – stultitia: cf. Pass. Quir. III.4 || 16/26 cf. Pass. Poll. I.3-4 || 28 consule – tibi: Pass. Iren. 4.6; Acta Cypriani 3.4 (ed. Musurillo, 172.11-12)

The Martyrdom of saints Donatus, Venustus and Hermogenes

I. In the days when the emperors Diocletian and Maximian were ruling, they resolved that, through an immense persecution they should seek out in every town or village⁴⁷ there might be the Christians who had diligently served Christ in order to force them to stray from the faith of Christ. 2. And so, by order of Diocletian, the governor Victorianus came to Sirmium to torment Christians: Thus, he began with the clergy. Having arrested saint Donatus, deacon in the holy church of Singidunum, who fought for a long time supported by the strength of Christian faith,⁴⁸ [Victorianus] cast him into prison.

3. As dawn broke the next day, the governor Victorianus said: "Donatus, who convinced you against worshipping our gods as we ourselves and our judges do?"

Saint Donatus told him: "I do not worship your deaf and mute gods. But I worship my Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of the living God*, who is true and almighty God."

4. Angered, the governor Victorianus told him: "Set aside this stupidity!"

The blessed Donatus said to him: "Stupid are you and your judges!"

When the governor heard these, his rage was inflamed, and he ordered that Donatus be seized and ordered he suffer the death penalty by decapitation.

II. Through a similar sentence, the cruel [governor] mentioned above led to the celestial palm also a priest of the church in Sirmium, who, together with saint Donatus deacon and martyr, put up a strong contest for the constancy of the faith and the people entrusted to him. 2. He also delivered to worldly death another holy deacon of that same church, who rejected the idols and despised the impious edicts, consuming with various kinds of torments him who was to be victorious in eternity. 3. But since his cruelty was not appeased with these, he decreed that the neighbouring cities ought to be searched as well. And under the pretext of public necessity he arrived at the city of Cibalae, from which Pullio, this most Christian martyr is known to originate. Then the Lord's providential mercy arranged that saint Venustus, brother of saint Donatus the martyr, was seized by the servants of the same impious Victorianus, and he ordered Venustus to appear before his tribunal.

4. When he was presented to him, Victorianus said: "Venustus, do you remember how I had the head of your brother Donatus cut off? You, at least, take heed, come and offer sacrifice to our gods, whom both us and our emperors worship, lest I order you endure a similar fate."

⁴⁷ Already in Late Antiquity, "castellum" was used interchangeably for "uicus." See Péter Kovács, *Vicus és castellum kapcsolata az alsó-Pannoniai limes mentén* (Piliscsaba: PPKE BTK, 1999), 23-50.

⁴⁸ Cf. Cerno, "Passio Donati," 367: "Donato ... che da molto tempo lottava grazie alla forza della fede cristiana."

5. Sanctus Venustus subridens dixit: “Viuit Dominus meus Iesus Christus, quia non scio plures deos esse, quos tu dicis; sed scio unum Deum *uiuum et uerum*, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, qui est trinus et unus Deus.”

6. Dixit ei Victorianus praeses: “Quid plura? Sacrifica diis.”

5 Dixit ei sanctus Venustus: “Non sacrifico diis tuis uanis, sed sacrifico Deo patri *sacrificium laudis*, qui regnat in caelis.”

Tunc furore repletus Victorianus praeses iussit ministris suis eum apprehendi et foras ciuitatem educi et ibi decollari. Et dum diutius orasset ad Dominum, decollatus est in eodem loco.

10 **III.** Et ecce appropinquauit beatus Hermogenes, qui cum cognouissent eum ministri rei publicae christianum esse, apprehendentes eum duxerunt ad praesidem. Et dum sibi eum praesentari fecisset, dixit ei praeses: “Dic mihi, Hermogenes, et tu seduci uis?”

Dixit ei beatus Hermogenes: “Tu seduceris, miser.”

15 2. Dixit ei Victorianus: “Fortassis et tu christianus uocaris?”

Dixit ei beatus Hermogenes: “Christianus uocor.”

3. Victorianus praeses dixit: “Quod officium geris Christi tui?”

Sanctus Hermogenes dixit: “Lectoris.”

Dixit ei praeses: “Vel quorum lectorum?”

20 Beatus Hermogenes dixit: “Qui scientiam populis legere consueuerunt.”

4. Dixit ei praeses: “Quae mandata legis, uel cuius salutis gaudia doces?”

Sanctus Hermogenes dixit: “Domino meo Iesu Christo regi saeculorum pia et sancta mandata.”

5. Praeses dixit: “Et quem deum adoras?”

25 Beatus Hermogenes dixit: “Vnum Deum uerum, *qui fecit caelum et terram, mare et omnia quae in eis sunt.*”

Dixit ei praeses: “Num dii nostri ueri dii non sunt?”

Dixit ei beatus Hermogenes: “Dii tui *lignei et lapidei* sunt, nec aliquid in se diuinum habent, nec sibi nec alicui praestare possunt salutem.”

30 6. Dixit ei praeses: “Hermogenes, consule tibi: ueni et sacrifico diis magnis: nam faciam te celerius puniri.”

2 1 Thes 1:9 || 6 Ps 106:22 || 25/26 Acts 14:14; cf. Ex 20:11; Ps 145:6; Acts 4:24 || 28/29 lignei – habent: cf. Dt 4:28, 28:36, 28:64, 29:17; 2 Kgs 19:18; Ez 20:32

2 non – esse: cf. *Pass. Quir.* III.2; *Acta Cypriani* 1.2 (ed. Musurillo, 170.9) || 10/11 cum – praesidem: cf. *Pass. Poll.* II.3 || 15/23 cf. *Pass. Poll.* III.1-2 || 25 unum – uerum: *Pass. Quir.* V.5; *Acta Cypriani* 1.2 (ed. Musurillo, 170.9-10) || 28 lignei et lapidei: cf. *Pass. Poll.* III.6, *Acta Marcelli* 1.1 (ed. Musurillo, 250.8-10); Theophilus, *Ad Autolycum* I.10 (ed. Bardy, 80); Tertullianus, *Apologeticum* 22.12 (ed. Dekkers, 130.56); *De idololatria* 3 (ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, 1103.19-29); Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 23 (ed. Hurter, 68-69) || 30 consule tibi: *Pass. Iren.* 4.6; *Acta Cypriani* 3.4 (ed. Musurillo, 172.11-12)

5. Smiling [at this], saint Venustus said: "My Lord Jesus Christ lives, and for that reason I do not know the many gods of whom you speak to exist, but I do know the one, *living, and true God*, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, who is threefold, yet one God."

6. The governor Victorianus told him: "What more? Offer sacrifice to the gods!"

Saint Venustus said to him: "I do not offer sacrifice to your empty gods, but I do offer a *sacrifice of praise* to God the Father, who reigns in heaven."

Then the governor Victorianus was filled with rage and ordered his servants to seize Venustus, take him out of the city, and decapitate him there. And after he had prayed to the Lord for a long time on that same spot, he was decapitated.

III. Now the blessed Hermogenes approached. When the public servants learned he was a Christian, they seized him and brought him to the governor. When the governor had Hermogenes presented for trial, he said to him: "Tell me, Hermogenes, do you also have a wish to be deluded?"

The blessed Hermogenes said to him: "You are the one deluded, o wretched one!"

2. Victorianus said to him: "Perhaps you too are called a Christian?"

The blessed Hermogenes said to him: "I am [indeed] called a Christian."

3. The governor Victorianus said: "What duty do you fulfil for your Christ?"

Saint Hermogenes said: "That of reader."

The governor said to him: "But of which readers?"

The blessed Hermogenes said: "Those who usually read the teaching to the people."

4. The governor told him: "What commandments do you read? And the blessings of which salvation do you teach?"

Saint Hermogenes said: "The pious and saintly commandments [taught] by my Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal king."

5. The governor said: "And which god do you worship?"

The blessed Hermogenes said: "The one true God *who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them.*"

The governor said to him: "So our gods are not true gods?"

The blessed Hermogenes said to him: "Your gods *are of wood and of stone*, and they have nothing divine in them, nor can they provide salvation either to themselves or to anyone else."

6. The governor said to him: "Hermogenes, think of yourself: come, and offer sacrifice to the great gods, otherwise I shall have you punished at once."

Respondit sanctus Hermogenes: "Iam pridem tibi dixi: non sacrifico diis tuis uanis, mutis et surdis."

Tunc iratus praeses iussit eum in carcere trudi. Apprehendentes custodes uinctis manibus trahebant eum ad carcerem.

- 5 **IV.** Et dum traherentur, conspiciens idolum, facto signaculo Christi comminatus est spiritui, qui in eo latitabat: et statim cecidit maxima pars templi; et ecce exiens daemon ab eo clamabat dicens: "*Quid nobis et tibi, uir Dei? Venisti ante tempus torquere nos?*" 2. Et introiuit in filiam praesidis, et clamabat per os eius dicens: "Si non uenerit uir Dei, quem in carcerem misisti, non exeo hinc." 3. Audiens autem haec
10 praeses iussit eum silentio ad se perducere: et cum uenisset beatus Hermogenes ad praesidem, dixit ei praeses: "Hermogenes, potes filiam meam saluam facere?"
4. Dixit ei beatus Hermogenes: "Non ego, sed Dominus meus Iesus Christus: in ipsius nomine possum eam saluam facere."
Dixit ei praeses: "Si potes, fac quod dicis."

- 15 **V.** Dixit ei uir Dei: "Si credis in Dominum meum Iesum Christum *filium Dei uiui*, qui tertia die resurrexit a mortuis, ego faciam quod promisi."
Praeses dixit: "Si iam sanam uidero filiam meam, credam in Deum tuum."
2. Sanctus Hermogenes dixit: "Scio quod falleris et non credis, quia obduratum est cor tuum. Sed propter populum adstantem faciam eam saluam."
20 3. Et posuit genua sua in terram, et rogauit Dominum dicens: "Domine Deus omnipotens, qui cognitor es omnium, praesta ut tua uirtute exeat daemon de puella hac." Et haec dicens erexit se et posuit manum super caput puellae, 4. et facto signaculo Christi dixit: "Praecipio tibi, immunde spiritus, in nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi, recede ab hac puella et non amplius eam fatigare audeas." Et statim exiit
25 ab ea et facta est quasi mortua. Et eleuauit uocem suam laudans et glorificans Deum, qui ea saluam fecit.

- VI.** Et uidit pater eius quod ipsa Dominum Deum caeli benediceret, obcaecato corde dixit ei: "Filia, dii tui te saluam fecerunt."
Audiens haec uir Dei subridens ait: "Dii tui uani sunt, sicut et tu factus esse
30 cognosceris, et nihil sibi nec aliis praestare possunt."
2. Victorianus iniquus praeses dixit: "Hermogene, noli tam diu uana et inutilia uerba prosequi; ueni et sacrificia diis, qui filiam meam saluam fecerunt."
3. Sanctus Hermogenes dixit ei: "Viuit Dominus Deus meus, qui filiam tuam saluam fecit: quia ipsum adoro et ei sacrificare non desisto."

2 mutis et surdis: cf. Dt 4:28 || 7/8 Mt 8:29; cf. Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34 || 15 Mt 16:16; Jn 11:27 || 18/19 obduratum – tuum: cf. Ex 7:22; Ps 94:8; Heb 3:8, 3:15 || 25 laudans et glorificans: cf. Dn 3:51; Lk 2:20 || 27/28 obcaecato corde: cf. Mk 6:52

3 iratus: cf. Pass. Iren. 5.1 || 25 laudans et glorificans: Pass. Poll. V.1

Saint Hermogenes answered: "I already told you: I do not offer sacrifice to your empty, mute and deaf gods."

Then the governor, angered, ordered he be thrown in prison. The guards seized Hermogenes and dragged him to prison, hands chained.

IV. While he was being delivered [to prison], he noticed an idol. Making the sign of Christ,⁴⁹ he threatened the spirit that was hiding in it: And immediately the greater part of the temple collapsed; and lo!, the demon came out of the statue, and shouted saying: "*What have you to do with us, o man of God? Have you come to torment us before time?*" 2. And he entered the governor's daughter, and shouted through her mouth saying: "Unless the man of God whom you sent into prison comes, I shall not leave here!" 3. Upon hearing these, the governor ordered that Hermogenes be brought to him in secret: And when the blessed Hermogenes came, the governor said to him: "Hermogenes, can you save my daughter?"

4. The blessed Hermogenes said to him: "Not I, but my Lord Jesus Christ: In his name I can save her."

The governor said to him: "If you can, do what you say."

V. The man of God told him: "If you believe in my Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of the living God*, who rose from the dead on the third day, I shall do what I promised."

The governor said: "When I see my daughter safe, I shall believe in your God."

2. Saint Hermogenes said: "I know you shall cheat and you shall not believe, for your heart is hardened. But on account of the people here present, I shall save her."

3. And he knelt down, and asked God saying: "O Lord almighty God, who knows everything, let it be that by your merit the demon departs from this girl." These said, he arose and put his hand over the head of the girl, 4. and making the sign of Christ said: "I command you, evil spirit, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, leave this girl and dare not harass her any longer." At once [the demon] departed from her, and she looked as if dead. And she raised her voice in praising and glorifying God, who saved her.

VI. And her father saw that she herself was blessing the Lord God of heaven. With darkened heart, he said to her: "Daughter, your gods saved you!"

Hearing this, the man of God smiled and said: "Your gods are empty, just as you have been made to realise, and they cannot provide anything either for them or for others."

2. Victorianus the wicked governor said: "Hermogenes, speak no more such empty and useless words! Come and offer sacrifice to the gods who saved my daughter."

3. Saint Hermogenes said to him: "My Lord God, who saved your daughter, lives: For this reason I worship him and I do not cease to offer sacrifice to him."

⁴⁹ The sign of the cross.

Victorianus praeses dixit: "Hermogene, doleo de pulchritudine tua et nisi celerius mihi acquieueris, diuersis poenis te adfici praecipiam."

4. Post haec iussit eum apprehendi et iterum in carcerem recludi; et non diu iterum iussit eum ante suum tribunal consisti. Et dum staret ante tribunal, dixit ei praeses:

5 "Iusserunt domini nostri imperatores caerimoniari."

5. Dixit ei sanctus Hermogenes: "Neque imperatorum praeceptis oboedio, neque sermonibus tuis acquiesco."

Tunc repletus furore Victorianus iussit frenum in os eius mitti, et foras ciuitatem duci, et ibidem decollari praecipit. 6. Et dum ad loca damnatorum peruenisset, posuit

10 genua sua in terram et Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum rogauit, ut eius spiritum acciperet: et statim decollatus est in eodem loco. Venientes autem uiri religiosi et tollentes corpus eius, sepelierunt eum prope corpora sanctorum martyrum. 7. Passi

15 sunt autem beatissimi martyres Christi Donatus, Venustus et Hermogenes sub die duodecimo Kalendarum Septembris, imperantibus Diocletiano et Maximiano imperatoribus; regnante Domino nostro Iesu Christo, cui est honor et gloria, laus et potestas per infinita saecula saeculorum. Amen.

1 doleo: *cf. Pass. Quir.* V.6 || **5** iusserunt – caerimoniari: *Acta Cypriani* 3.4 (ed. Musurillo, 172.9-10) || **10/11** dominum – acciperet: *cf. Pass. Iren.* 5.4 || **11** statim – est: *cf. Pass. Sereni* 5.1

The governor Victorianus said: "Hermogenes, I deplore your beauty but if you do not obey me at once, I shall command your demise through various punishments."

4. After that he ordered that Hermogenes be seized and confined once more to prison. Not long after, he ordered that he stand again at his tribunal. And when [Hermogenes] stood for trial, the governor said to him: "Our lords, the emperors, gave the order to worship [the gods]."

5. Saint Hermogenes said to him: "I do not obey the commandments of the emperors, nor do I submit to your entreaties."

Then Victorianus, filled with rage, ordered he be put a gag in his mouth and be brought outside the city and there beheaded. 6. When [Hermogenes] came to the place of execution, he knelt down and prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ to accept his spirit: And he was immediately beheaded on that very spot. Now religious men came, took his body, and buried him near the bodies of the holy martyrs. 7. The most blessed martyrs of Christ Donatus, Venustus, and Hermogenes suffered on the twelfth day before the Kalends of September,⁵⁰ by order of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, in the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom honour and glory, praise and might for ever and ever. Amen.

⁵⁰ The 21st of August.

3. *SCIO UNUM DEUM VIVUM ET VERUM, QUI EST TRINUS ET UNUS DEUS: THE RELEVANCE OF CREEDAL ELEMENTS IN THE PASSIO DONATI, VENUSTI ET HERMOGENIS*

One of the most peculiar features of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is the abundance of confessional statements, quite elaborately phrased. These statements can indicate that the *passio* was composed in a period of doctrinal clarification. I suggested it might have been the late fifth – early sixth century, in the milieu of Aquileia. In the following, I shall concentrate on the passages with doctrinal bearing, analysing them from a contextual and audience-oriented perspective. I hope to show that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was written in support of an anti-heterodox propaganda, inspired by the campaign that Chromatius, bishop of Aquileia in 388-408, led. A caveat must be reiterated: Considering what we know on the cult and hagiography of Donatus and companions, the interpretation I propose here may be plausible. Nonetheless, it does not constitute a definitive solution, simply because the dossier is too ambivalent.⁵¹

This being said, it strikes that the theological content of the confessional statements analysed below fits well the context of late antique doctrinal debates. In their light, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* can be seen as an identity-constructive discourse that vehiculates Nicene tenets to a community plagued with doctrinal divide and comprising heterodox members. The creedal insertions speak about the author's aims and the mind-set of the target audience, revealing a new compositional dimension.

The *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* offers ample proof that its compiler was less interested in the historicity of the narrated events, and more in the effect the story would produce on its readers. As the popularity and the authority of hagiographies increased, and the martyr was perceived as a model of the perfect Christian, more and more accent was placed on the life of the martyr and his/her Christian beliefs were given more detail. Where necessary, the biographic material could be supplemented with stock-motifs, as a certain type of ideal conduct in words and deeds came to be expected. Here we find the ingenuity of hagiographers: Just like the famous authors of sermons on martyrs, they too could manage – in a less conspicuous way – to impress certain facets in the story of the martyr, which they wanted to foster amongst those who came in contact with the text.⁵²

A similar tendency transpires in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* too. The primary aim of the compiler was not necessarily to inform his target-audience,

⁵¹ What follows is a revised version of my “*Scio unum Deum.*”

⁵² *Mart. Perpetuae* 1.5 (ed. Musurillo, 106.16-25) already declares its intentional composition for the edification of posterity. A more ready example is the very *Passio Pollionis*, in which a lengthy exposition of Christian orthopraxis sought to incline the target-audience to adopt it entirely. Cf. section III.3 above.

but rather to reform it, to bend it according to what he perceived as the right behavior and belief. In spite of the rapid pace of the narration, the verbal exchanges between the persecutor (Victorianus) and the three martyrs (Donatus, Venustus, and Hermogenes) stand out. The redactor eluded many hagiographic conventions, such as tortures, attempts at bribery, extensive perorations about the superiority of the Christian faith, (final) prayers.⁵³ Given their structural prominence, the martyrs' retorts, infused with Scriptural allusions and doctrinal assertions, are the key to interpret the text. This brings us to the two questions I wish to address: What does this hagiography communicate to the audience of that time through the words pronounced by the martyrs? And what can we glean from the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* about the composition, beliefs, and prospects of said audience? The confessions expressed by Donatus and his brother, Venustus, are particularly apt to answer these questions. First, however, it seems opportune to discuss briefly the confessional statement of Hermogenes.

Hermogenes' confession reiterates traditional topics of the Christian argumentation against paganism: In the first part, it proclaims God as creator of the entire cosmos. Echoing the *Passio Pollionis*, the second part, in turn, attacks the pagan pantheon with an apologetic *locus communis*: Namely, that the gods are nothing more than statues made of wood and stone, and, as such, they cannot effect salvation:

"Praeses dixit: "Et quem deum adoras?" Beatus Hermogenes dixit: "Vnum Deum uerum qui fecit caelum et terram, mare et omnia quae in eis sunt." Dixit ei praeses: "Nam dii nostri ueri dii non sunt?" Dixit ei beatus Hermogenes: "Dii tui lignei et lapidei sunt, nec aliquid in se diuinum habent, nec sibi nec alicui praestare possunt salutem."⁵⁴

Of all the declarations given by the three accused Christians, this one is the most consistent with the circumstances of the early fourth century persecution. It represents nothing more than one would expect from a confessor of that time and that theological maturity, as many other early Christian writings and reliable hagiographic texts show.⁵⁵ Hermogenes' two replies cited above have rich Scriptural parallels: Acts 4:24, 14:14; Ex 20:11; Ps 145:6 on one hand, Dt 4:28, 28:36, 28:64,

⁵³ Exceptions are Hermogenes' exorcism prayer and his repeated interrogation, but even then the governor is satisfied with merely threatening the reader. This is not singular where Pannonian martyrs are concerned, especially those of Pannonia Secunda: The text from which the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* took inspiration, the *Passio Pollionis*, displays the same concentration on the dialogue between prosecutor and the accused Christian. The *Passio Sereni* focuses in a similar way on the verbal exchange between the gardener and the presiding magistrate. In neither case is there any reference to torture or to a longer trial, one of the factors that gave them the appearance of historical reliability, just as it happened with Donatus' legend.

⁵⁴ *Pass. Donati* III.5-6.

⁵⁵ For the representation of God as creator of the universe in martyr-acts, see the study of László Perendy, "Deum qui fecit caelum et terram: Identifying the God of Christians in the Acts of Martyrs," in Leemans, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, 221-239. For similarities with apologetic literature and other martyr-acts, see the apparatus above.

29:17; 2 Kgs 19:18; Ez 20:32 on the other hand The scriptural imagery that clothes Hermogenes' confession is not surprising, being part and parcel of the reader's office.

Up to this point, Hermogenes' interview with Victorianus was modelled on the *Passio Pollionis*. Symptomatic is, however, that from Pollio's ensuing description of the tenets of the Christian faith, the redactor of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* took over only the part about pagan gods being mere wood and stone. Where Pollio offered a comprehensive view of Christian morals and way of life, in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* the "scientia" Hermogenes read to the community distinctly emphasises the doctrinal aspect.

In comparison, the confessions of the two brothers, Donatus and Venustus, are more elaborate. After refusing to worship the pagan gods, Donatus states:

"(...) colo autem Dominum meum Iesum Christum, Filium Dei uiui, qui est uerus et omnipotens Deus."⁵⁶

Venustus' declaration is of a theological complexity paradoxical to the context when it was supposedly uttered:

".... uiuit Dominus meus Iesus Christus, quia non scio plures deos esse quos tu dicis, sed scio unum Deum uiuum et uerum, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, qui est trinus et unus Deus."⁵⁷

The two creedal passages are altogether gratuitous for a dialogue purportedly consumed at the beginning of the fourth century. Donatus pronounces a Christological statement (Christ is true and omnipotent, almighty God) of central place in the Nicene-Arian debate. Venustus, in turn, uses a Trinitarian formula that was crystallised much later. One can hardly find any parallel – in particular to Venustus' uttering – in hagiographic productions referring to the Great Persecution. Its contrast with any pretense of reliability is obvious, and this fact does not seem to have given qualms to the redactor of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.

The Nicene dogmatic undertones must be the redactor's own phrasing, infused in the narrative by design. They are of secondary importance in the context of a persecution initiated by non-Christians, since at the time the decisive factor was the *nomen Christianum* alone. On the contrary, presenting the one God as three ("trinus et unus") would have been decidedly counterproductive: It could be interpreted in a polytheistic sense,⁵⁸ which would have mitigated the Christians' attempt to present their God as complete alterity. However, the doctrinal formulae above are no longer out of place in a context of inner-Christian strife and even persecution. To an audience confronted with challenges of this type, Donatus' and Venustus' confessions are indeed exemplary, and their martyrdom a worthy model to follow.

⁵⁶ *Pass. Donati* I.3.

⁵⁷ *Pass. Donati* II.5.

⁵⁸ An objection often raised by the later fourth century Homoeans.

What could have motivated a hagiographer to portray Donatus and Venustus as Nicene Christians? Several viable explanations present themselves, in connection with the martyrs' place of origin (Illyricum) and with the place where their relics were eventually deposited (Aquileia).

Illyricum was, during the entire fourth century, but even in the fifth century, a notoriously heterodox region. We find Homoean bishops in two places mentioned in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*: Ursacius and Secundianus in Singidunum, Germinius in Sirmium. Secundianus was condemned at the council of Aquileia in 381 AD alongside Palladius of Ratiaria. Although 381 AD and the council of Aquileia are traditionally considered the end of the Homoean (Arian) controversy in the West, scholarship has long acknowledged that Homoean nuclei persisted in Illyricum throughout the fifth century.⁵⁹ There is no indication that either Palladius of Ratiaria or Secundianus of Singidunum, nor, for that matter, other Homoean bishops such as Iulianus Valens of Poetovio, had effectively been deposed after the condemnation of 381. In fact, most of post-Theodosian Arian literature has been written in Illyricum: The *Opus imperfectum in Matthaëum*, a series of sermons,⁶⁰ and Maximinus' famous *scholia* on the acts of the council of Aquileia.⁶¹

The Christological attributes confessed by Donatus, "uerus et omnipotens Deus," are also two of the attributes that Arius conferred exclusively to God the Father in his letter to bishop Alexander of Alexandria. This letter formed the pretext and starting-point of the proceedings against Palladius and Secundianus at the council of Aquileia: They were asked to condemn it point by point, and to confess that whatever Arius reserved for the Father was also to be applied to Christ. It was precisely around "Deus uerus" and "Deus potens" that the conciliar debate of 381 was most heated.⁶² Both terms, "uerus" and "potens," are intrinsically connected with the Arian subordinationist doctrine. Perhaps Donatus' assertion, that the Son is "omnipotens Deus" comes as a reaction against this subordinationist tendency.⁶³ It implies that the Son and the Father are equally almighty on account of their shared divinity. It follows that in the mind of the redactor and his target-audience, the memory of the Aquileian council as well as of the Illyrian heterodoxy must have still been fresh. In these conditions, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* serves as insurance that Illyricum surpassed its heretical stage.

But a passive remembrance of a (more or less remote) unorthodox past is not enough to explain the employment of such conspicuous theological denominators.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Neil McLynn, "From Palladius to Maximinus: Passing the Arian Torch," *J ECS* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 477-493.

⁶⁰ Raymond Etaix, "Sermons ariens inédits," *RechAug* 26 (1992), 143-179.

⁶¹ *Scholies ariennes* (ed. Gryson).

⁶² *Acta concilii Aquileiensis* 17-22 (ed. Gryson, 340-344) and 31-33 (ed. Gryson, 352-354). For the weight of these attributes in the overall debate at the council of Aquileia, see Yves-Marie Duval, "Le sens des débats d'Aquilée pour les Nicéens: Nicée – Rimini – Aquilée," *AnAI* 26 (1982): 83-90.

⁶³ For the late fourth century contestation of "omnipotens," see especially Palladius, *Apologia* 130 (ed. Gryson, 312).

These make sense against an active anti-heretical background, directed against heterodox elements in the target-audience or at least in its environment. In these circumstances, the dogmatic declarations serve as identity-barriers to distinguish between several intra-Christian groups: In our case, they belong to the identity-forming patterns of the Nicene party, later triumphant as the orthodox party. Donatus and Venustus are, thus, spokespersons for this particular branch of Christianity. That great and exemplary martyrs of the past embraced it speaks for the superiority of Nicene Christianity. We are faced here with an etiological appropriation of the past to the benefit of the Nicene party: The martyrs shed their blood not just for Christianity, but specifically for its “orthodox” branch. Such argument represented a very effective tool in the campaign against “heretics.”

And, indeed, the Aquileian community at the turn of the fifth century was as much in need of an anti-heretical propaganda as two decades earlier. The council of Aquileia was far from being a definitive a victory over Arianism. Palladius himself disputed the authority of that ecclesiastical gathering; Ambrose was forced to defend it. Later, Maximinus defended in his *scholia* the positions held by Palladius and Secundianus.⁶⁴ One of the objections raised by Palladius offers an interesting parallel to the subject at hand. Palladius, and in his footsteps, Maximinus, did not hesitate to repeat a long-standing accusation against the Nicenes, namely that they believed in three gods.⁶⁵ Venustus’ insistence that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are “*trinus et unus Deus*” might echoe this very polemic.

In Western Illyricum, the waves of migrating populations which succeeded one another indirectly favored the resistance against the Nicene restoration. The proximity of the philo-Arian Goths, especially the pastoral work of Ulfila, and the emigration of both Nicenes and non-Nicenes from Illyricum mainly to Italy complicated matters even more. If only a minority, the Arians were a persistent presence on the social landscape of late fourth – early fifth century Northern Italy. Already Ambrose of Milan complained of the disruptions they caused at Forum Cornelii by disseminating Arian teaching.⁶⁶ Chromatius also struggled to cope with their presence at Aquileia.⁶⁷ The emphasis set by Donatus on the divinity of Christ could be read as a warning against and an attempted correction of some Arian tendrils causing trouble in the community addressed by the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.

⁶⁴ Cf. Yves-Marie Duval, “La présentation arienne du concile d’Aquilée de 381: A propos des «Scholies ariennes sur le concile d’Aquilée» par R. Gryson,” *RHE* 76 (1981): 317-331, commenting on the different reactions to the Aquileian council throughout the late fourth century and the first half of the fifth century.

⁶⁵ Palladius, *Apologia* 129 (ed. Gryson, 310-312): “uos tres omnipotentes deos credendos duxistis, tres sempiternos, tres aequales, tres ueros [...] tres nihil impossibilitatis habentes.”

⁶⁶ Ambrose of Milan, *Ep.* 7.36.27-29 (ed. Zelzer, 18-19).

⁶⁷ Cf., e.g., Chromatius, *Tractatus in Matthaëum* 35.3 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 369.50-57).

And the heresies which plagued Illyricum did not end with Arianism. A less spectacular, but equally threatening and eminently Pannonian controversy was initiated by bishop Photinus of Sirmium, another pivotal setting in the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. Although Photinus was deposed in 351 AD, his teaching persisted in Illyricum, furthered by adepts such as Bonosus of Serdica. Promoted especially by heterodox Illyrian refugees, it lingered over Northern Italy all through the fifth century.⁶⁸ Thus also the Photinians were a very real social presence in the region of Aquileia in the fifth century, and the local bishop, Chromatius, was forced to speak up against them repeatedly.⁶⁹

Photinians denied the Trinity altogether and taught a kind of adoptionist Christology. Venustus' explicit embracing of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity may be a deliberate response to Photinian ideas. The Trinitarian formula he adopted, "trinus et unus Deus," is another peculiarity of this *Passio*. Very popular in the Middle and later ages, the use of this formula is absent in the fourth century, and rather uncommon in the next, preference being given to the concepts of "trinitas" and "unitas."⁷⁰ While there is no difference in content, the simplified "trinus et unus" appears in a handful of authors of the fifth century, among whom pseudo-Augustine and Eugenius of Toledo feature prominently.⁷¹ As such, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is one of the first attestations of the formula.

These observations reveal that the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* was composed in a heterogenic milieu, in which the Nicene Christian faction was threatened by one or more marginal, yet influential, heretical group(s). These consisted most probably of Illyrian refugees. The *passio* served to the mainstream body of immigrants also as an insurance policy, introducing them to their adoptive

⁶⁸ Council of Arles II (443-452 AD), *can.* 16, 17 (ed. Mansi, 7:880); Innocent I, *Ep.* 41 (ed. Migne, 607-608). See Bratož, "Kirchenpolitischen und kulturhistorischen Beziehungen," 162; Bratož, "La chiesa," 135-138; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Innocent I's Letter to Lawrence: Photinians, Bonosians, and the *Defensores ecclesiae*," *JThS* 63 (2012): 136-155; Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Innocent I on Heretics and Schismatics as Shaping Christian Identity," in *Christians Shaping Identity from the Roman Empire to Byzantium: Studies Inspired by Pauline Allen*, ed. Geoffrey D. Dunn and Wendy Mayer, SVigChr 132 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2015), 284.

⁶⁹ Chromatius, *Tractatus in Matthaëum* 2.6 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 206.170-178); 4.3 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 213.90-214.95); 35.3-4 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 369.44-80); 50.3 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 448.112-129); *Sermones* 11.4 (ed. Lemarié, 1:220.109-115); 21.3 (ed. Lemarié, 2:44.60-74). In many of these cases, the Photinian heresy is associated with the Arian one. On the presence of Photinians among the immigrants to Aquileia, see Yves-Marie Duval, "Aquilée et Sirmium durant la crise arienne (325-400)," *AnAl* 26 (1985): 378-379; Bratož, "La chiesa," 135.

⁷⁰ As a close approximation of the content of Venustus' creedal statement, one might recall, among others, Chromatius, *Tractatus in Matthaëum* 13.2-3 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 624.19, 625.30-31): "...ut Trinitatis unitas declaretur (...) Quia tam uerus pater Pater est, quam uerus et Deus est; sicuti et tam uerus filius Filius est, quam uerus et Dominus est. Perfecta ergo fides est Trinitatis ostensa (...) ut uerum Patrem, uerum Filium, uerum etiam Spiritum sanctum crederemus: tres personas, sed unam diuinitatem Trinitatis unamque substantiam."

⁷¹ Pseudo-Augustine (fourth-fifth century), *Oratio in libros de Trinitate* (ed. Mountain, 555.92-3): "Deus trine et une, scientiae lumen accende in me per quod te intellegere et uidere merear trinum et unum deum sicut es trinus et unus deus;" Eugenius of Toledo, *Liber carminum* 76 (ed. Farmhouse Alberto, 267.11-12): "Te donante, precor, qui regnans trinus et unus / texit in aeternum saecula cuncta Deus."

community as orthodox – since their martyrs were outspokenly orthodox. This facilitated their acceptance and their integration. Said milieu presents remarkable resemblance to the Aquileia of Chromatius (bishop between 388-408 AD), whose pastoral legacy endured long in the Adriatic city.

Chromatius' difficulties with the Photinian heresy, the close contacts Aquileia had with Illyricum during his tenure (augmented by Chromatius' personal contacts with Illyrian personalities such as Jerome or Auxentius of Ioviae), the centrality of Trinitarian theology in his thought⁷² fit well the horizon of expectations set by the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* outlined in the pages above. The *passio* reflects the ecclesial landscape contemporary to its compiler, which it attempts to shape. With its obvious display of Christological and Trinitarian formulae, this hagiographic narrative supports well Chromatius' legacy. Its author will remain anonymous forever, yet this much can be ascertained: He must have supported similar pastoral activities.⁷³ Thus, the literary-theological analysis proposed above verifies the composition date established in the second section of this chapter.

As I hope to have shown, the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis* is saturated by preoccupations characteristic to the time of its composition. It suggests a pending heretical threat that the redactor tried to counter by making use of the latest dogmatic developments, possibly even aiming at implementing them in the everyday flow of Christian life. This interpretation is contextual, but also conjectural, given the lack of clarifying sources. While it may be accurate, it does not represent compelling evidence that might lead to the exclusion of other interpretations proposed in secondary literature.

⁷² On the Trinitarian theology of Chromatius as the sacrament of salvation and the key to unfold the Christian mystery, see Giulio Trettel, "La cura pastorale di Cromazio per la sua Chiesa," in *Cromazio di Aquileia, 388-408: Al crocevia di genti e religioni*, ed. Franco Piusi (Milan: Silvana, 2008), 230-33; and Alberto Cozzi, "L'attualità della dottrina trinitaria di Cromazio nel contesto della teologia nicena," in Beatrice and Peršič, *Chromatius of Aquileia*, 647-682.

⁷³ All the more so since Chromatius' pastoral activity was essentially a catechetical one, condensed in the urge to respond to the heterodox challenges "inuicta fide." Cf. Chromatius, *Tractatus in Mattheum* 22.1-2 (ed. Etaix and Lemarié, 301.1-24). This is also the reason why Chromatius prefers to avoid the technical terminology of Nicene Christology (such as person, nature, consubstantial, etc.). Instead, he opts for a much more accessible explanation of the Christian Trinitarian mystery – an explanation whose general lines as well as expression agree with the dogmatic statements uttered by the martyrs of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*.

CONCLUSION

The pages of this volume sought to offer a systematic survey on a substantial part of the late antique Pannonian hagiographic corpus, namely, the *Passiones* written in the late fourth – early fifth century. These are: *Passio Quirini*, *Passio Irenaei*, *Passio Pollionis*, and *Passio Sereni*; with the *Passio Donati*, *Venusti et Hermogenis* included as a telling example of creative hagiographic reception. These sources are all the more important since they also form the essence of the Christian literature in late antique Pannonia. Using a contextual-comparative approach, my research attempted to identify the background, the aims, and the implications of these hagiographies for the local and wider Christian dynamics. An essential step in my analysis was the critical assessment of available liturgical, archaeological, epigraphic, and literary sources in order to sort out the often complicated and obscure documentation on the cult of the respective martyrs. As the reader will have had occasion to notice, the hagiographic dossiers of Pannonian martyrs raise more questions than can be answered in a satisfying way: Their fragmentary, ambiguous, and corrupted transmission often challenges the formulation of conclusive opinions. Nonetheless, important critical work carried out in the last decades, both on the hagiographic dossiers and the texts of the *passiones*, made it possible to resolve a number of pressing scholarly questions.

Each hagiographic dossier was studied in a separate chapter, consisting of three main sections: An introduction discussed sources related to the cult of individual martyrs, outlining also the geo-chronological framework in which the *passio* would then be situated. The second section was dedicated to the respective hagiographic text, commenting on its composition, timeline, and functions; original language; relationship with other hagiographies, etc. This was succeeded by the Latin text cited from the latest critical editions and a facing English translation. The third section of each chapter was devoted to the analysis of the *passiones* in light of their contribution to the formation and affirmation of Christian identity at local and wider level.

I viewed the five *passiones* as literary, rhetorical, and theological writings, but I also tried to highlight their contribution to a better knowledge of late antique Pannonian history. The methodology varied from one text to another, depending on their contents and specificities. As a rule, I tried to observe the theology of martyrdom that informs each text, the role granted to Scriptures, and the way the text communicates with its target-audience (audience-oriented analysis).

The only *passio* stemming from Pannonia Prima is the *Passio Quirini*. It is also the longest and the most complex text. Quirinus is mentioned, apart from the usual martyrological sources, by Jerome, Prudentius, Venantius Fortunatus and Gregory of

Tours. Based on these sources, the *Passio Quirini* can be dated safely to the late fourth century. Its theology of martyrdom focuses on the theme of sacrifice and the solidarity between the bishop and the Christian community he leads. In that, the *Passio Quirini* might inform us about the development of episcopal authority in late antique Pannonia.

The next three hagiographies, *Passio Irenaei*, *Passio Pollionis*, and *Passio Sereni*, had been written in Pannonia Secunda, most probably in an environment influenced by the capital Sirmium.

The *Passio Irenaei* and the *Passio Pollionis* are structurally and textually related. They both follow the protocols of a Roman court trial. They share textual passages and also the (imagined) character of the persecutor. Yet, it is difficult to assess which of the two texts served as the model for the other, if we ought to consider anteriority in these terms at all. A more or less certain composition date can be established only for the *Passio Pollionis* (last two decades of the fourth century), although the *Passio Irenaei* must date from the same period. Both, moreover, show familiarity with African hagiography and apologetics. The *Passio Irenaei* has, for example, a number of thematic features in common with the *Passio Perpetuae*. Of these the most flagrant is when Irenaeus' family and friends visit him and plead he apostatise, but he immediately renounces them. The *Passio Pollionis*, in turn, repeats a cherished expression of African apologetics: Pagan gods are mere stone and wood. Pollio thus adopts the apologetic method of speaking about Christianity and God, in terms understandable to a pagan audience.

In spite of these similarities, the focus of the two texts is different. Whereas the *Passio Irenaei* strives to present the bishop as a model of *imitatio Christi*, the *Passio Pollionis* focuses on the more "mundane" aspects of being a Christian: Namely, how one should behave in everyday life, in relation to family, to one's entourage, to the society at large.

The *Passio Sereni*, in turn, is a carefully directed hagiographic invention, grafted on the model of the socially insignificant person exposed to the sexual and civic harassment of the socially powerful. It recalls the scriptural stories of Susannah and of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, respectively. The text is concerned, just as the *Passio Pollionis*, with defining / outlining a proper Christian conduct. This gives room, in both hagiographies, also to considerations on ascetic tendencies. The two hagiographies, thus, address urgent issues in late fourth-century Pannonia Secunda, particularly in Sirmium and its neighborhood.

In the final chapter, I discussed the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*. Written in Northern Italy, this last *passio* is the most problematic of the entire corpus. It borrows textual material from the *Passio Pollionis*. Martyrological sources attest only Donatus as a Pannonian martyr. The rest of the group was probably added in Aquileia, through the contamination of various hagiographic traditions. Although it is not, strictly speaking, a Pannonian *passio* (it was not written in Pannonia), I included

it in my study because through it we gain insight into the fate of Pannonian Christians after the first waves of barbarian migration. It is also illustrative for the intricacies of relic transfer and the parallel traditions likely to emerge with such relocations.

A recurring observation in the chapters of this work is that the Pannonian *passiones* are not just textually connected with one another, but they share the late antique hagiographic universe of images and expressions at large. We encountered stock-motifs such as: *imitatio Christi* (*Passio Irenaei*); the theme of sacrifice (*Passio Quirini* and *Passio Irenaei*); flight from persecution, related to the providential election of the martyr (*Passio Quirini* and *Passio Sereni*); the refusal to sacrifice legitimated with the quotation of Ex 22:20, etc. But we were also faced with the apologetic argumentation against polytheism (*Passio Pollionis*); and comments on “hot” topics at the time, such as asceticism (*Passio Pollionis* and *Passio Sereni*) or obedience to secular authorities (*Passio Pollionis*). The use of hagiographic tropes, however, does not diminish the identity-formative value of these texts. Late fourth century and early fifth century audiences expected to encounter them in a hagiographic text. It was precisely through these *topoi* that hagiographers could orient the beliefs and the behaviour of their audience.

As we have seen, with the exception of the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, the hagiographies studied here were most likely written in Pannonia, to serve the martyrs’ local cult. One surmises, therefore, that their primary audience consisted of the local Christian community engaged in the respective cult. This means that through these texts we can also get a glimpse of the socio-cultural and religious-historical landscape of late antique Pannonia. They reflect thriving local Christian communities, with well-established hierarchies: Amongst the martyrs we find readers (Pollio), deacons (Demetrius, Donatus), priests (Montanus), and bishops (Irenaeus, Quirinus), but also laypersons (Syneros). Moving the focus to the compositional context in late fourth century, the inscriptions *ad martyres* evoke the devotion and aspirations of elite Christians.

Macedonius and his wife (inscription *ad Irenaeum*), Aurelia Aminia and Artemidora (*CIL* 3.10232 and 3.10233, respectively), must have belonged to the local elite, since they could afford the costs of purchasing a burial place near the martyrs as well as the costs of the epitaphs. Stone and marble were rare commodities in Pannonia. They usually had to be imported, adding an extra burden on the price. Moreover, the topographic indications on *CIL* 3.10232 suggest again a more costly project.¹ Provincial aristocracy likewise engaged in the cult of Quirinus, albeit there is no convenient inscription at hand to prove this. Yet, his veneration and possible translation to the Platonica in Rome appears, as we have seen, to be linked with Pannonian elites serving in Rome. It is possible that, when the *limes* became unstable,

¹ The commissioner made certain in this type of epitaphs that the *fossores* would place the tomb in the indicated place. See Duval, *Auprès des saints*, 136-137.

these affluent members of the Pannonian communities undertook the safeguarding of the relics to better protected areas. Despite the many doctrinal divisions that plagued the province, the cult of martyrs remained a constant of Pannonian Christianity in Late Antiquity.

That is not to say that it was exclusively the province of the elites, merely that their devotional practices left traces visible even today. The *Passio Sereni*, with its plot centred on a socially marginal character, could be construed as an appeal for Christian social inclusivity. In addition, the epitaph of Aurelia Aminia suggests a more complex social outlook. Since she retained her own *cognomen*, Aurelia Aminia was probably a member of the local aristocracy. She was also the wife of an imperial guard, Flavius Sanctus. The husband too must have been Christian. It is likely that he was initially a soldier of modest background, who served in the ranks before being recruited as *protector*.²

Two important factors influenced the history of Pannonia in the second half of the fourth century: On one hand, the region became more and more exposed to the barbarian presence. On the other hand, precisely because of this presence, the imperial court often sojourned there. As barbarians drew closer, the prospect of death loomed on the horizon. In this sense, the hagiographic writings could offer a model of how to be reconciled, or even embrace impending hardship and personal danger.

At the same time, the imperial court was bound to attract any number of new converts, with various degrees of Christian conviction. To them it was important to provide guidelines on how to be a good Christian in a digestible way – and the stories of the martyrs had all the necessary ingredients to accomplish that task. The hagiographies presented here offered a sort of pastoral support similar to, *mutatis mutandis*, episcopal efforts in preaching and mentorship.³ In this concluding section, I would like to return to two prominent aspects in Pannonian hagiography: Preoccupations concerning the right behaviour and the presentation of episcopal authority through the portraits of the martyrs.

Delineating the tenets of a genuine Christian *forma mentis* is an obvious concern of Pannonian hagiography. For example, the *Passio Pollionis* contains a veritable manual of orthopraxis, offering advice on all kinds of Christian social interaction (*Pass. Poll.* III). Important to note is that it also commends married life, and not just the ascetic ideal of virginity. The *Passio Sereni* too denotes a positive view

² On recruiting imperial guards (*protectores* or *protectores domestici*), see A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 636-640. On the rise to social prominence and wealth that accompanied serving as imperial guard, see Lenski, *Failure of Empire*, 35-37 (speaking of Valentinian and Valens' family).

³ On the subject of episcopal mentorship, see, more recently, the contribution of Peter Gemeinhardt, "Bishops as Religious Mentors: Spiritual Education and Pastoral Care," in *Episcopal Networks in Late Antiquity: Connection and Communication Across Boundaries*, ed. Carmen Angela Cvetković and Peter Gemeinhardt, AKG 137 (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2019), 117-147, especially 126-130 on Zeno's sermons to the neophytes.

on marriage, as long as it conforms to the Christian rules of pudicity: Syneros' problem with the matron was that she behaved inappropriately for a wife. It seems that in Pannonia asceticism was indeed present, but it was not held in such a high esteem during the second half of the fourth century. In that period, monastic communities are not attested in Pannonia.⁴ Instead, hagiographers set marriage on a par with asceticism,⁵ and sought to foster the Christian view on marriage.

The concern for an appropriate behaviour, rather than focus on the doctrinal aspects of Christianity might have two reasons. Firstly, we know of the existence of heterodox factions in the Pannonian communities, especially those from Pannonia Secunda.⁶ In these conditions, silence on doctrinal tenets might stem from an effort to evade problematic theological content. With the *Passio Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis*, written in a milieu with strong "orthodox" tradition, doctrinal affiliation became important. It was crucial to show that Pannonians professed indeed the right faith. Secondly, showing how to live a genuine Christian life was an effective strategy of attracting and catechizing new converts, or rallying them to the spirit of Christianity.

The *passiones* of Pannonian martyrs also address the role of the bishop. The hagiographies of Pollio, Quirinus and Irenaeus offer ample material on the development of episcopal authority. According to the reasoning of the *Passio Pollionis*, bishops and clergy are guardians of the apostolic tradition.⁷ Their teaching, therefore, contains the necessary tenets to lead a truly Christian life and one is expected to conform to them. Quirinus, too, wishes to remain constant to his episcopal teaching. The ultimate expression of this aspiration is his declared intention to die as a representative for the entire community, by offering himself as a sacrifice to God.⁸ Similarly, Irenaeus presents himself as a sacrifice representative for the entire community.⁹ This self-understanding shows an awareness of the authority a bishop can and does wield, but also an awareness of the responsibilities he has towards the community.

As I hope to have shown, the Pannonian *passiones* analyzed above, though built around hagiographic tropes, are also representative for the social and cultural landscape of the community that generated them. Through their liturgical usage in the celebration of the martyr's cult they played an important role in the formation of Christian collective memory. In their *passio* the martyrs implicitly became spokespersons of a given hagiographer. Their words and deeds became part of a legitimating mechanism aimed at shaping the expectations of their audience, at

⁴ Although it must be noted that this is an argument *ex silentio* and should be treated with caution.

⁵ See *Pass. Poll.* III.7: "[Christi ... mandata] quae uirgines integritatis suae docent obtinere fastigia, coniuges pudicam in creandis filiis conscientiam custodire."

⁶ At Sirmium, for instance, Mirković suggested two distinct burial sites, one frequented by Arians (cemetery of Syneros), one by Nicenes (cemetery of Irenaeus). See Mirković, *Sirmium: Its History*, 129-130, and section II.3.3 above.

⁷ *Pass. Poll.* IV.4.

⁸ *Pass. Quir.* III.5, VI.6.

⁹ *Pass. Iren.* 5.1-2.

affecting their self-perception as Christians. For all these reasons, the hagiographic narratives which formed the subject of this work contribute to a better understanding of the socio-cultural, doctrinal, and literary history of late antique Christianity – both regionally, in Pannonia, as well as globally.

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Scriptural Index

| | | | | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|--|---------|--------------|--|
| Gn | | | Mk | | |
| 1 | 169 | | 1:24 | 190 | |
| 39:7-23 | 168n65 | | 6:52 | 190 | |
| Ex | | | Lk | | |
| 7:22 | 190 | | 2:20 | 130, 190 | |
| 20:11 | 188,195 | | 4:34 | 190 | |
| 22:20 | 56, 64, 85-86, 94, 101, 130, 133, 203 | | 14:26 | 96 | |
| Dt | | | Jn | | |
| 4:28 | 128, 186, 188, 190, 195 | | 1:9 | 128, 133 | |
| 28:36 | 128, 188, 195 | | 11:27 | 186, 190 | |
| 28:64 | 128, 188, 195 | | 19:28 | 162 | |
| 29:17 | 128, 188, 196 | | Acts | | |
| 31:6 | 54 | | 4:11 | 162 | |
| 32:17 | 86, 94, 130, 133 | | 4:24 | 56, 188, 195 | |
| Josh | | | 7:58 | 98 | |
| 1:9 | 54, 96 | | 14:14 | 188, 195 | |
| 1 Sm | | | Rom | | |
| 2:10 | 128 | | 13:1-7 | 128, 134n113 | |
| 2 Sm | | | 1 Cor | | |
| 22:14 | 128 | | 7 | 128, 139 | |
| 2 Kgs | | | Eph | | |
| 19:18 | 128, 188, 196 | | 1:18 | 94 | |
| Ps | | | 4:4 | 94 | |
| 17:14 | 128 | | Phil | | |
| 18:10-11 | 128 | | 1:21 | 96 | |
| 40:1-2 | 171 | | 3:14 | 94 | |
| 94:8 | 190 | | 4:13 | 54, 96 | |
| 95:5 | 56 | | Col | | |
| 106:22 | 188 | | 1:16-17 | 56 | |
| 118:22 | 162 | | 1 Thes | | |
| 134:6 | 56 | | 1:9 | 188 | |
| 145:6 | 188, 195 | | 1 Tm | | |
| Is | | | 2:1-2 | 134n113 | |
| 37:19 | 128 | | 2:2 | 128 | |
| 41:10 | 54 | | 6.12-13 | 94 | |
| 42:1 | 98 | | 2 Tm | | |
| Jer | | | 4:17 | 54 | |
| 2:27 | 128 | | Ti | | |
| Ez | | | 3:1 | 128, 134n113 | |
| 3:14 | 54 | | Heb | | |
| 20:32 | 128, 188, 196 | | 3:8 | 190 | |
| Dn | | | 3:15 | 190 | |
| 3:51 | 130, 190 | | 7:19 | 94 | |
| 13:1-64 | 149, 166-168 | | 11:16 | 94 | |
| Mt | | | 1 Pt | | |
| 8:29 | 190 | | 2:13-17 | 128, 134n113 | |
| 10:23 | 8, 54, 62-63, 171 | | 2:18 | 128 | |
| 10:33 | 94 | | 1 Jn | | |
| 10:37 | 96 | | 5:20 | 54 | |
| 16:16 | 186, 190 | | Ws | | |
| 16:17-18 | 162, 171 | | 1:7 | 56 | |
| | | | Ecclus | | |
| | | | 45:20 | 56 | |
| | | | 46:20 | 128 | |

Index of Ancient and Medieval Sources

Acta et passiones

Acta Cypriani

- 1.2 56, 188
- 3.2 58
- 3.4 96, 186, 188, 192
- 3.5 56, 86n69, 96, 130

Acta Marcelli

- 1.1 128, 188

Acta Materni

- 121n82

Ep. Phileae

- 9 56, 86n69, 96, 130

Mart. Agapis, Eirenis et Chionis

- 63, 171
- 1.3 8n45, 54, 63n115, 160

Mart. Apollonii

- 47 7n35, 101n115

Mart. Carpi

rec. gr.

- 17 7n37, 54

rec. lat.

- 4.1 8n43, 101n110
- 4.2 130, 164

Mart. Cononis

- 149n39, 157
- 2.5 157, 160
- 2.6 157, 160
- 4.1 162, 163n59
- 6.2 171n81
- 6.7 7n38, 56, 64n125

Mart. Dasii

- 5.2 7n38, 56, 64n125

Mart. Perpetuae

- 63, 92, 202
- 1.5 194n52
- 3.1-3 92n101, 94
- 15.6 7n36, 54, 63n119
- 21.11 8n43

Mart. Petri

- 138
- 4-5 126

Mart. Pionii

- 5.4-5 128
- 21.4 7n41

Mart. Polycarpi

- 66, 171
- 1 66-67, 104
- 5 8n45, 54, 63n114, 160, 171n80
- 14 7n39, 8n43, 56
- 18 7n41

Pass. Anastasiae

- 14, 18-19, 88, 181n36

Pass. Crispinae

- 1.7 7n37, 54

Pass. Demetrii

- 14, 18

Pass. Donati, Secundiani et aliorum, numero LXXII

- 177

Pass. Donati, Venusti et Hermogenis

- 14, 18-19, 118, 121, 123-124, **173-200**, 201-203, 205

I

- 180

I.1

- 182-183

I.2

- 182

I.3

- 196

II

- 180

II.1

- 182-183

II.2

- 182-183

II.3

- 183

II.5

- 196

III-VI

- 180

III.3

- 183

III.5-6

- 195

III.5

- 183

Pass. Erasmi

- 14, 19

Pass. Felicis

1

- 54

30

- 7n38, 56, 64n125, 67, 103

Pass. Fructuosi

3.5-6

- 104

6.3

- 60

7.2

- 7n35, 101n115

Pass. Hermachorae et Fortunati

- 15, 173, 178-179, 181-182

Pass. Irenaei

- 14-16, 18-19, 24, 51, 65-67, **69-105**, 118, 123, 132n105, 133, 137n130, 149, 157, 172, 201-203

1.1

- 80, 100n106.107

1.2

- 78, 80, 84, 91n98, 92n102, 100n106.107

2

- 79

2.1-2

- 86

2.1

- 56, 81, 85, 101, 126, 130, 133n109

2.2

- 81, 87n73

2.3

- 81, 101, 137n130

2.4

- 81, 103

2.5-7

- 87n73

3

- 79

3.1-2

- 92

3.1

- 78, 81, 93

3.2

- 81, 84n58

3.3

- 79, 81, 100-101

3.4

- 81-82, 87n73, 102

- Pass. Irenaei*
 3.5 82
 4.1-2 80
 4.1 58, 82, 92
 4.2 79, 82
 4.3 54, 82, 102
 4.4 56, 102
 4.6 79-80, 82, 186, 188
 4.7 79, 82, 101
 4.8 56, 85, 130
 4.9 79, 102
 4.11 60, 83, 123n94
 4.12 56, 85, 65n128, 102, 128
 5 88n79
 5.1-2 205n9
 5.1 83, 190
 5.2 102
 5.3 82
 5.4-5 83, 103, 126
 5.4 66n135, 85, 192
 5.6 82
 6.1 84
- Pass. Iuli*
 1.1 94, 126
 2.6 128
 3 60, 98
 4.5 130, 164
- Pass. Mariani*
 2.2 7n37
 2.3 8n43, 101n110
- Pass. Montani*
 123-124
- Pass. Petri Balsami*
 1 56, 86-87, 94, 96, 126, 130
- Pass. Phileae*
 1.1 56, 86n69, 94, 130
- Pass. Pollionis*
 14-16, 18-19, 51, 66, 72, 77,
 84-91, 104-105, **107-139**,
 149, 156-157, 163n59, 172,
 175, 181-184, 194n52, 195-
 196, 201-205
 I 51
 I.1 48, 84n57, 123, 182, 186
 I.2-4 77, 88n80, 120
 I.2 49, 72n17, 182, 186
 I.3 49, 85-86, 98, 120, 135, 182,
 186
 I.4 120, 182-183, 186
 II 134
 II.1 183
 II.2 123n89, 183
 II.3 58, 94, 183, 188
 III 204
 III.1-2 87n73, 188
 III.2 88n79, 132, 162, 183
 III.3 135, 138
 III.4 120, 136
- III.5 136n126, 183
- Pass. Pollionis*
 III.6 120, 132, 136, 183, 188
 III.7-11 120
 III.7 139, 205n5
 III.9 66n133, 133
 III.11 85, 101n112, 120, 133
 III.12 98, 116n58, 127n98, 135
 IV.2 133, 137
 IV.3 56, 85 120n79, 133
 IV.4 85-86, 96, 104-105, 119n75,
 120, 205n7
 V.1 111n27, 136n127, 164, 190
 V.2 120, 137n131
- Pass. Quattuor Coronatorum*
 14, 16, 18
- Pass. Quirini*
 14, 16, 18-19, **27-67**, 102,
 171, 201-203
- I 46
 I.1-3 48, 62
 I.1 47-48, 62n111, 84n57,
 123n94
 I.2 48-49, 51n97
 I.3 48, 51n95
 II-VI 46
 II 62
 II.1 62, 160
 II.2-3 62n113
 II.3 171
 II.4 186
 II.5 63n118, 96, 171
 II.6 96, 130
 II.7 64n120
 III.2 64, 65n127, 101n112, 188
 III.3 64n121, 94, 130
 III.4 186
 III.5 64, 94, 96, 98, 102n122,
 103n126, 205n8
 IV.3 96
 V-VII 31n12
 V.2 47
 V.5 188
 V.6 192
 V.7 65n130
 VI.4-VII.1 35
 VI.4 46, 65n131
 VI.5 49, 84n57, 98, 123n94
 VI.6 205n8
 VII.1-VIII.2 47n88
 VII 49
 VII.1 46, 49, 94, 98
 VII.2 28, 46, 49, 66n1
 VII.3 49-50
 VII.4 50
 VII.5 50
 VIII.1-2 29
 VIII.1 50

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Pass. Sereni</i> | 14-15, 17-19, 63, 84, 139, 141-172, 195n53, 201-205 | Ammianus Marcellinus | 89-90 |
| 1.1 | 150, 168n66, 170n71 | <i>Hist.</i> | 27.11 90n89 |
| 1.2 | 54, 63n116, 170n72 | | 28.1.32-33 90n89 |
| 2.2 | 156 | | 29.6.8-11 90n89.90 |
| 3.2 | 156, 168n66 | | 30.5.4-11 90n89.91 |
| 3.5 | 163n59 | | 30.5.7 90n94 |
| 3.7 | 170 | | |
| 3.8 | 170 | Anonymus Lugdunensis | 22, 38-39, 73-74, 144-145, 150 |
| 4.2 | 170 | | |
| 4.3 | 168n67, 170, 171n77 | <i>Martyrologium</i> | |
| 5.1 | 130, 192 | ad 23 feb. | 145 |
| 5.2 | 84n62 | ad 25 mart. | 74n26 |
| <i>Pass. Theodori</i> | 56 | ad 4 iun. | 38 |
| <i>Pass. Ursicini</i> | 14, 18 | | |
| <i>Vita Theodoti Ancyrensis</i> | 23 56 | Asterius of Amasea | 5n27, 157 |
| | | <i>Hom.</i> | |
| | | IX: <i>In s. Phocam</i> | 157 |
| | | XI: <i>Ecphrasis in Euphemiam</i> | 5n27 |
| <i>Acta concilii Aquileiensis</i> | 17-22 197n62 | | |
| | 31-33 197n62 | | |
| Ado Viennensis | 22-23, 39, 74, 110, 145 | Basil of Caesarea | |
| <i>Martyrologium</i> | 22-23, 110 | <i>Epistulae</i> | |
| ad 23 feb. | 145 | 155 | 114n47 |
| ad 25 mart. | 74n24 | 164 | 114n47 |
| ad 28 apr. | 110n21 | 165 | 114n47 |
| ad 4 iun. | 39 | | |
| Agnellus of Ravenna | 107, 112-115 | Beda Venerabilis | 22 |
| <i>Liber pontificalis</i> | 112-113, 115 | | |
| 22 | 112 | <i>Breviarium Syriacum</i> | 20-21, 70, 109, 122, 142- 143, 147 |
| <i>Altercatio Heracliani</i> | 9n48, 156 | ad 23 feb. | 143 |
| | | ad 6 apr. | 70 |
| | | ad 28 apr. | 122 |
| Ambrose of Milan | 2n6, 12, 90n92.95, 117-118, 134, 138-139, 198 | | |
| <i>Epistulae</i> | | Chromatius of Aquileia | 12n64, 31-32, 194, 198-200 |
| 7.36.27-29 | 198n66 | <i>Tractatus in Matthaeum</i> | |
| 72 | 117 | 2.6 | 199n69 |
| 72.3 | 117n62 | 4.3 | 199n69 |
| 72.12 | 117n65 | 13.2-3 | 199n70 |
| 72.16 | 117n66 | 22.1-2 | 200n72 |
| 75.2-3 | 117n66 | 35.3-4 | 199n69 |
| 75.4 | 117n65 | 35.3 | 198n67 |
| 76.19 | 117n65 | 50.3 | 199n69 |
| <i>extra coll. 12</i> | 117-118, 138n1 | <i>Serm.</i> | |
| <i>extra coll. 12.1</i> | 117n62 | 11.4 | 199n69 |
| <i>De obitu Valentiniani</i> | 117n64 | 21.3 | 199n69 |
| <i>De obitu Theodosii</i> | 117n64 | <i>Chronicon Gradense</i> | 42 |
| | | <i>Codex Theodosianus</i> | 10 |
| | | 5.7.5 | 10n54 |
| | | 10.10.25 | 10n54 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Constitutiones Sirmondianae</i> | | Irenaeus of Lyon | 69, 72-73, 85 |
| 16 | 10n54 | <i>Adversus haereses</i> | |
| | | 5.24.1 | 128, 134n115 |
| <i>Collectio Auellana</i> | | Itineraries | 17, 20, 23, 36, 40, 107, 114-115 |
| 39.4 | 10n52 | <i>De locis sanctis martyrum</i> | 23, 40, 114 |
| Council of Arles II | | <i>Itinerarium Malmesburiense</i> | 23, 40, 114 |
| can. 16 | 199n68 | <i>Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae</i> | 23, 40, 114 |
| can. 17 | 199n68 | <i>Notula oleorum</i> | 23, 40 |
| Cyprian of Carthage | 34n19, 35, 63 | | |
| <i>Epistula ad Fortunatum</i> | | | |
| | 86, 91-92 | | |
| Eugenius of Toledo | 199 | Jerome | 27, 29, 31. 33-35, 39-40, 44, 46, 49-50, 52, 90, 138, 169, 200-201 |
| <i>Liber carminum</i> | | <i>Chronicon</i> | 29, 31, 33, 38-39, 45n82, 46 |
| 76 | 199n71 | ad ann. 308 | 31, 33, 49-50 |
| Florus | 22, 38-39, 74, 110, 145 | ad ann. 372 | 90n91 |
| <i>Martyrologium</i> | 22, 39 | <i>Vita Pauli</i> | 169 |
| ad 23 feb. | 145n25 | 3 | 169 |
| ad 25 mart. | 74 | | |
| ad 28 apr. | 110 | Justin Martyr | |
| ad 4 iun. | 38 | <i>Apol. I</i> | |
| Gregory of Nyssa | | 17.1-3 | 128, 134n114 |
| <i>In s. Theodorum</i> | 5n27 | | |
| Gregory of Tours | 27, 31, 33n17, 34-35, 52, 201-202 | Libanius | |
| <i>Historia Francorum</i> | | <i>Orationes</i> | |
| 1.35 | 34-35 | 20.25 | 116n59 |
| | | 24.12 | 90n90 |
| Hilary of Poitiers | 9n48 | <i>Liber pontificalis</i> | 121n83 |
| <i>Fragmenta</i> | | <i>Magnum Legendarium Austriacum</i> | 108, 146, 183-184 |
| A.III.5 | 9n48 | | |
| B.VI.7 | 9n48 | <i>Martyrologium Hieronymianum</i> | |
| Ignatius of Antioch | | | 13, 18, 20-23, 29, 35-38, 42, 44-46, 70-71, 76-77, 107-108, 110, 114, 121-122, 142-144, 146, 173, 175, 177-180 |
| <i>Epistula ad Romanos</i> | | ad 17 feb. | 176 |
| 2.2 | 7n39 | ad 18 feb. | 176 |
| | | ad 22 feb. | 144, 147 |
| Innocent I | | ad 23 feb. | 143 |
| <i>Epistulae</i> | | ad 26 mart. | 77, 124 |
| 41 | 199n68 | ad 6 apr. | 70, 77 |
| | | ad 9 apr. | 77, 119, 175, 177-178 |
| Inscriptions | | ad 24 apr. | 107 |
| <i>CIL</i> | | ad 26 apr. | 107-108 |
| 3.10232 | 141-142, 156, 203 | ad 28 apr. | 107-108, 122n84 |
| 3.10233 | 141-142, 156, 203 | ad 30 apr. | 38 |
| 3.14340 ² | 141n2 | ad 6 mai. | 177 |
| <i>ILCV</i> | | ad 29 mai. | 107-108 |
| 1.1777 | 42n68 | ad 4 iun. | 35-36 |
| 1910 | 41n62 | ad 23 aug. | 71, 175, 177-178 |
| <i>ICUR</i> | | | |
| 5.13276 | 42n68 | | |

Martyrologium Romanum

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | 23, 40, 74, 110, 146 |
| ad 23 feb. | 146 |
| ad 25 mart. | 74 |
| ad 28 apr. | 110 |
| ad 4 iun. | 39 |
| Maximinus | 197-198 |
| <i>Scholia</i> | 118n67, 197-198 |
| Minucius Felix | |
| <i>Octavius</i> | |
| 23 | 128, 136n124, 188 |
| <i>Opus imperfectum in Matthaëum</i> | |
| | 197 |
| Palladius of Ratiaria | 118n67, 197-198 |
| <i>Apologia</i> | |
| 129 | 198n65 |
| 130 | 197n63 |
| Paulinus of Milan | |
| <i>Vita Ambrosii</i> | |
| 5 | 90n92 |
| 8 | 90n92 |
| 11 | 12n63, 90n95, 139n142 |
| Prudentius | 27, 31-35, 39, 44, 52, 201 |
| <i>Peristephanon</i> | 34 |
| VII | 32-34, 39, 66 |
| Ps-Augustine | 199 |
| <i>Oratio in libros de Trinitate</i> | |
| | 199n71 |
| <i>Synaxarium Aethiopicum</i> | |
| | 73 |
| ad 23 aug. | 73 |

Synaxarium Armenum

71n11, 73

Synaxarium Constantinopolitanum

| | |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| | 20, 22, 73, 108-110, 142, 144 |
| ad 22 feb. | 144 |
| ad 26 apr. | 109-110 |
| ad 27 apr. | 109 |
| ad 28 apr. | 108-109 |
| ad 29 apr. | 72 |
| ad 23 aug. | 71, 72n13 |

Tertullian

Apologeticum

22.12 128, 136n124, 188

De idololatria

3 136n124, 188

3.2-4 128

Theophilus of Antioch

Ad Autolycum

1.10 128, 136n124, 188

1.11 128, 134n115

Usuard

Martyrologium

23, 39 74, 110, 145-146

ad 23 feb. 145

ad 25 mart. 74n25

ad 28 apr. 110n21

ad 4 iun. 39

Venantius Fortunatus 27, 31, 35, 201

Carmina

8.3 35

Vigilius of Thapsus

*Contra Arianos, Sabellianos,**Photinianos Dialogus*

89n87

Zosimus

Historia

III.36.2 116n59

Index of Ancient Names

- VII uirgines, martyrs 119, 175
 Agape, Chione and Eirene, martyrs 63
 Agrippinus, martyr 13
 Alaric 26
 Alatheus 26
 Alexander, bishop of Alexandria 197
 Amantius, *praeses* 28, 35, 46-47, 49-50, 52, 56-61, 65
 Anastasia of Sirmium, martyr 13, 14n67, 181n36
 Anemius, bishop of Sirmium 12, 26, 118
 Aquileia 12, 19, 21, 27, 31-32, 41-42, 44-45, 118, 141, 173, 175-180, 181n36, 185, 194, 197-200, 202
 Aquincum 9, 13, 88n82
 Artemidora 142, 156, 203
 Ataulf 178-179
 Athanasius of Alexandria 9n48, 63, 89n87, 134
 Augustine of Hippo 138
 Aurelia Aminia 141, 156, 203-204
 Auxentius, bishop of Ioviae 200
 Basil of Amasea 109
 Basilla, martyr 13
 Bonosus, bishop of Serdica 199
 Brigetio 13
 Cantii (Cantius, Cantianus, Cantianilla) 41
 Carnuntum 9, 11, 178n18
 Catacombs / cemeteries
 at Kamenica 111-112
 northern cemetery of Sirmium 104, 141-142, 147, 156, 205n6
 eastern cemetery of Sirmium 76, 104, 156, 205n6
 San Sebastiano fuori le Mura 27, 29, 38-40, 47, 60-61
 Platonia, mausoleum 29, 36-37, 42-44, 203
 of Pontianus 107, 114-115
 of Praetextatus 38
 Chrysogonus, martyr 181n36
 Cibalae 13, 87, 88n80, **107-139**, 174-175, 182, 187
 Forum Iulii (Cividale del Friuli) 173, 177, 179-180, 183-185
 Concordia 176-177
 Conon, martyr 149, 157, 171
 Constantius Chlorus, emperor 83
 Constantius II, emperor 11, 156
 Dalmatia 10, 31, 76
 Demetrius of Sirmium, martyr 13, 14n67, 77, 120, 126-127, 182, 203
 Diocletian, emperor 9, 25, 28, 30, 44, 48, 51, 54-55, 71n12, 80, 84n57, 88, 94-95, 98-99, 110, 123n92, 126-127, 130-131, 147-148, 155, 181-183, 186-187, 192-193
 Donatus, martyr 13, 17-18, **173-200**, 202-203
 Emona 43
 Eusebius of Caesarea 134
 Eusebius, bishop of Cibalae, martyr 13, 107-108, 110, 116, 120-123, 126-127, 130-131, 134, 137n131
 Eusebius of Nicomedia, martyr 122
 Felix, bishop, martyr 67, 103
 Flavia Viventia 43
 Flavius Sanctus, *protector* 141, 204
 Flavius Simplicius 43
 Fortunatus, martyr 13, 175-176, 178, 185
 Fredericus, patriarch of Aquileia 179
 Fructuosus, bishop, martyr 104
 Galerius Maximianus, emperor 13, 30, 32 38-39, 44, 48, 51, 54-55, 74, 80, 84n57, 89, 94-95, 98-99, 123n92, 126-127, 130-131, 145-149, 152, 160-161, 182-183, 186-187, 192-193
 Germinius, bishop of Sirmium 9n48, 11, 26, 197
 Grado 41-42, 45, 52, 179
 Gratian, emperor 2n6, 10, 12, 26, 117-118, 138
 Hermagoras, martyr 173, 176, 178-179
 Hermogenes, martyr 121, **173-200**
 Illyricum 1, 9-11, 19, 38-39, 48, 51, 54-55, 89-90, 119, 179, 197-200
 Innocent II, pope 29
 Ioannes 41
 Irenaeus, bishop of Sirmium 13, 17, 24, 44n81, 65, **69-105**, 109-110, 118, 120, 123, 126-127, 134, 141, 149, 155-156, 182, 202-203, 205
 Iulianus Valens, bishop of Poetovio 197
 Iustina, empress 90n95, 118, 156
 Justinian I, emperor 10, 110
 Latinus, martyr 41
 Laurentinus, deacon 37
 Laurentius 41
 Liberius, pope 43
 Liberius III, bishop of Ravenna 112-115
 Licinius, emperor 109
 Macedonius 75, 203
 Magydos (Pamphilia) 157
 Marcellinus, martyr 114-115
 Marcellus, prison ward 28, 58-59, 65
 Martin of Tours 31-32, 35
 Maxima of Singidunum, martyr 13, 119, 124, 139
 Maximilla, *uirgo* 43
 Maximus, *iuridicus* 28, 46, 52, 54-59, 63-65
 Milan 10, 117-118, 177
 Montanus of Singidunum, martyr 13, 77, 119, 120n80, 124, 126-127, 182, 203
 Mursa 10-11, 13
 Niceforus 41
 Nicomedia 20, 70-71, 122

- Noricum 10
 Noviodunum 36
 Nunita, deaconess 43
 Pannonia
 Prima 9-11, 28, 30, 32, 41-42, 47, 52, 56-59, 88n82, 201
 Savia 9, 26, 34, 41, 52, 88n82
 Secunda 9, 13, 26, 88, 149, 174, 195n53, 202, 205
 Valeria 9-10, 26, 88n82
 Paschal I, pope 114
 Pergentinus, martyr 37
 Peter, martyr 114-115
 Phocas, martyr 157
 Photinus, bishop of Sirmium 11, 26, 89n87, 199
 Pollio of Cibalae 13, 14-15, 17, 19, 23-24, 72, 86-87, 90, 104, **107-139**, 149, 156, 179, 182-184, 186-187, 196, 202-203, 205
 Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna 63, 66, 143, 147
 Pompeius Probus 89
 Probus, emperor 88-89
 Probus, *praeses* 71, 73-74, 79-82, 85, 87n73, 88, 92-99, 101-102, 116, 120, 126-131, 134-135, 136n127, 137-138, 149, 182-183
 Quattuor Coronati, martyrs 13, 14n67
 Quintus Aurelius Symmachus 138n133
 Quirinus of Siscia 13, 16-18, 21n99, 23, **27-67**, 103, 171, 179, 201, 203, 205
 Quirinus, tribune, martyr 37-38
 Radagaisus 26
 Ravenna 12, 14n67, 41n63, 107-108, 111-115, 118, 156, 179, 184
 Romanus of Antioch, martyr 34n19
 Rome 1, 10, 12, 14n67, 16, 19, 23, 26-27, 29-30, 32-34, 36-37, 39-40, 42, 44-45, 47, 60-61, 107, 111, 114-115, 119, 139, 173, 203
 Romulus, martyr 174-177
 Rufius Viventius Gallus 43
 Rutulus, martyr 36
 Sabas, martyr 114n47
 Sabbatia, martyr 13
 Savaria 9, 11, 13, 18, **27-52**, 58-59, 65, 67
 Scarbantia **27-32**, 40-41, 47, 50, 58-61
 Secundianus, bishop of Singidunum 197-198
 Secundus, martyr 13
 Sergius II, pope 114
 Sextus Claudius Petronius Probus 88n83, 89-91, 135
 Silvanus, martyr 174-177
 Singidunum 9, 11, 13, 74, 77, 88n80, 120n80, 124, 126-127, 174, 182, 186-187, 197
 Sirmium 9-13, 18, 26, 51, **69-105**, 110, 116, 118-119, 121-122, 124, 126-127, **141-172**, 174-175, 177-178, 181-182, 186-187, 197, 202, 205n6
 Siscia 9, 11, 13, 18, **27-52**, **58-63**
 Smyrna 143, 147
 Sopianae 13
 Syneros (Serenus) of Sirmium 13, 15, 17-18, 24, 104, 119, 139, **141-172**, 177, 203, 205
 Theodosius, emperor 2n6, 10, 34, 90n92, 117n64, 197
 Thessalonike 12, 14n67
 Trier 10
 Ulfila 198
 Ursacius, bishop of Singidunum 11, 197
 Ursicina 141
 Ursicinus, martyr 13, 14n67
 Valens, bishop of Mursa 11
 Valens, emperor 3, 26, 89n88, 204n2
 Valentinian I, emperor 26, 89-90, 113, 116-118, 126-127, 134-135, 182-183, 204n2
 Valentinian II, emperor 10n52, 113, 116-118, 138n133, 156
 Valerian, emperor 122n85
 Valerianus, bishop of Aquileia 31-32
 Venustus, martyr **173-189**, **192-199**
 Victorianus, *praeses* 174, 181-183, 186-193, 195-196

Index of Modern Authors

- Aigrain, René 6n31, 20n90.91, 21n94.95, 22n101.103.105.107, 23n111.112, 107n5
 Amore, Agostino 36n31, 73n23, 113n36, 114n52.54.55, 116n60, 119n71
 Anatolios, Khaled 2n7
 Ashbrook Harvey, Susan 4n17, 6n29, 5n24.26, 9n47
 Ayres, Lewis 2n7, 11n56, 12n62
 Balogh, Albin 93
 Barkóczy, László 10n51.53
 Barnes, Michel René 2n7
 Barnes, Timothy D. 6n32, 88n83, 117n63.66, 118n67
 Beatrice, Pier Franco 12n64, 200n72
 Bellen, Heinz 117n62.64
 Benvin, Anton 91n98, 92n104, 93, 96, 101n109, 132n105
 Bernardino, P. 8n45
 Bollandus, Iohannes 148n36.37, 150n41, 151, 157
 Bowersock, Glen W. 4n16
 Brakke, David 89n88
 Bratož, Rajko 10n53, 11n55, 12n64, 13n66, 15n75, 16-17, 41n63, 84n63, 87n76, 88n77.78.83, 104n128, 112n30, 147n33, 173n4, 175n8, 178, 179n26.28, 180, 181n37, 185, 199n68.69
 Brown, Peter 4n16, 5n22
 Bugarski, Ivan 14n67, 74n28, 111n23
 Burghardt, Andrew F. 9n50
 Butterweck, Christel 8n44
 Caldarelli, Giuliana 93, 116n60, 119n71, 122n85, 124, 158
 Cameron, Averil 4n16.19, 5n23
 Carletti, Carlo 43n72
 Castritius, Helmut 10n53
 Cerno, Marianna 173n2, 174, 177n16, 179, 180n33, 181, 183n39, 185, 187n48
 Chastagnol, A. 90n92
 Chiesa, Paolo 14, 27-30, 31n11, 33n16.17, 34, 37n32, 38n43, 41, 42n67, 43n74, 44n81, 45n82, 46-48, 49n91, 51-53
 Clark, Elizabeth A. 3n11, 138n136
 Colombi Emanuela 14n69, 53, 173n2, 176n12, 185
 Cooper, Kate 3n10
 Cozzi, Alberto 200n72
 Cuscito, Giuseppe 173n4
 Cvetković, Carmen Angela 204n3
 Daniele, Ireneo 109n14, 113n38, 116n60, 119n71
 De Gaiffier, Baudouin 3n12, 4n20, 6, 7n33.39.41, 83
 Deichmann, Friedrich Wilhelm 112n35, 113
 Delehay, Hippolyte 4n20, 6n31, 20n87, 21, 22n101.102, 36-37, 38n40, 42n66, 70-72, 107-110, 113n37, 119n71.74, 122n84, 124n96, 143-144, 175n7, 176, 177n17
 Deliyannis, Deborah 89n88
 Demandt, Alexander 13n66, 16n77
 Den Boeft, Jan 90n96
 Depaepe, Mate 5n28
 Der Nersessian, Siraphie 73n18-20
 De Rossi, Giovanni Battista 21, 23n114, 70, 143n14
 De Ste Croix, Geoffrey E.M. 8n44
 De Waal, Anton 43n69.73
 Dolbeau, François 14, 69, 73n22, 75-76, 78, 80, 83-85, 87, 88n81, 90n92, 91-93, 104, 123
 Draganić, Ifigenija 69n3, 84
 Drijvers, Jan Willem 89n87.88
 Dubois, Jacques 20n88.89, 21n92.94, 22n104.106.108, 23n110, 39n49
 Duchesne, Louis 21, 70, 143n14
 Dufourq, Albert 15, 119
 Dunn, Geoffrey D. 199n68
 Duval, Noël 70n4, 74n28-30, 76n36-38, 141n2
 Duval, Yves-Marie 197n62, 198n64, 199n69
 Duval, Yvette 5n25, 75n34, 112n35, 113, 142n7, 203n1
 Edwards, Mark J. 16n78
 Egger, Rudolf 15, 31n14, 173, 176, 178-180, 185
 Ellison, Mark D. 41n63
 Errington, R. Malcolm 90n95
 Etaix, Raymond 197n60
 Farioli Campanati, Rafaella 112n35, 113
 Farlatus, Daniel 124
 Ferguson, Everett 4n18, 7n37.40, 8n42
 Ferrua, Antonio 36n31, 43
 Fitz, Jenő 9n49, 88n77.82, 90n90
 Frutaz, A.P. 73n23
 Galvao-Sobrinho, Carlos R. 2n6
 Gáspár, Dorottya 40n56
 Gemeinhardt, Peter 16n77, 204n3
 Goffart, Walter A. 1n1
 Goltz, Andreas 13n66, 16n77
 Gonzato, Ada 37n32, 41n63, 42n65, 53
 Gottlieb, Gunther 2n6
 Grabar, André 4n21
 Grabar, Oleg 4n16
 Graumann, Thomas 12n62
 Groß-Albenhausen, Kirsten 2n6, 117n65
 Haensch, Rudolf 2n5
 Hahn, Cynthia 42n64
 Hallsall, Guy 1n1
 Hamman, A.G. 93, 124, 158
 Hanson, Richard P.C. 2n7, 11n56-58, 12n62.63
 Hayward, Paul Anthony 5n22

- Heather, Peter J. 1n1.4
 Heil, Uta 2n7, 12n62
 Henkens, Bregt 5n28
 Henschenius, Godefridus 73n22, 93, 124
 Herzog, Reinhart 84n63, 155n44
 Hildebrandt, Henrik 16, 19n86, 86, 87n76, 91, 92n100
 Honigmann, Ernst 110n18
 Howard-Johnston, James D. 5n22
 Hunt, David 90n96
 Hunter, David G. 4n17, 138n136
 Husenbeth, F.C. 114n50
 Iskra-Janošić, Ivana 111n23.24.26, 112n31
 Jarak, Mirja 11n59, 15, 17, 87n76, 91, 104n128, 112n30, 116n60, 119n71, 122n85, 147n33, 155n45, 178n19.20.22, 181n35
 Jensen, Robin M. 41n63
 Jeremić, Miroslav 74n28, 141n2, 142n6
 Jones, A.H.M. 204n2
 Kaster, G. 43n69.73
 Kelly, John N.D. 138n137
 Kirsch, J.P. 109n14, 114n53
 Kovács, Péter 12n65, 16-17, 18n82, 34n21, 35n23.24, 41n63, 42n68, 43n71, 53, 74n28, 75, 76n38, 84n63, 87n76, 93, 108, 109n14, 112n29, 116n60, 120n81, 122n88, 123-124, 141n2, 142n5, 158, 173n3, 178n20.23, 185, 187n47
 Kraft, Karl-Friedrich 2n8
 Kuhl, M. 114n53
 Kulikowski, Michael 1n4
 Künzi, Martin 8n46
 Laurence, P. 3n15
 Leclercq, H. 121n82.83
 Leemans, Johan 3n13, 4n20, 5n23.28, 8n45, 16n77, 57n107, 63n117, 195n55
 Lemaître, Jean-Loup 20n89, 21n92.94, 22n104.106
 Lemajić, Nenad 69n3
 Lenain de Tillemont, Louis Sebastien 148n36
 Lengyel, A. 10n51
 Lenski, Noel 1n4, 89n87, 90n95, 204n2
 Liebeschuetz, John H.W.G. 2n6.9, 3n14, 117n65
 Lill, Eva-Maria 2n8
 Lizzi Testa, Rita 1n3
 Lotter, Friedrich 10n53
 Lunn-Rockliffe, Sophie 117n64
 Maraval, Pierre 93
 Marchini, C. 8n45
 Marcon, Enrico 173n4
 Mattaloni, Claudio 179
 Mattaloni, Valeria 176, 177n16
 Mayer, Wendy 199n68
 McLynn, Neil 197n59
 Migotti, Branka 11n59, 25, 41, 111n23.25
 Milin, Milena 93, 142n4, 158
 Milošević, Petar 70n4, 75n32, 76n36, 141n2
 Minov, Sergey 70n5
 Mirković, Miroslava 70n4, 74n28.30, 75n31.32, 76n38, 91n97, 104, 141n2.3, 142n4.8.9, 147n33, 156, 205n6
 Mitrea, Mihail 64n126
 Mócsy, András 9n49, 52n101, 88n82, 90n90, 112n30
 Moretti, Paola F. 19n84
 Moss, Candida R. 7n34, 64n125, 101n116
 Musurillo, Herbert 88n77, 92-93, 155n43, 157, 163n59
 Nagy, Levente 16-17, 40n55, 41n57, 42n68, 43n72.77.78, 44n80, 53, 74n28, 75n33m 76n36, 84n63, 86, 87n76, 89n85.86, 90n92, 93, 139, 141n2.3, 142n6, 147, 148n34, 156n48.51, 158, 166, 168-169, 172n82
 Nauerth, Claudia 112n35
 Nicholson, Oliver 8n45, 63n117
 Noga-Banai, Galit 41n63
 Novak, David M. 89n87.88
 Oswald, J. 36n31
 Palmer, Anne-Marie 33n17
 Pani, Laura 184n42
 Papebrochius, Daniel 53, 73n22, 93
 Parvis, Paul M. 16n78
 Paschini, Pio 173n4, 177, 179, 181n36
 Peebles, Bernard M. 34n18
 Pellegrino, Michele 7n34
 Perendy, László 195n55
 Perrone, L. 8n45
 Peršič, Alessio 12n64, 200n72
 Picard, Jean-Charles 75n34, 112n35
 Pietri, Charles 3n12
 Pietri, Luce 3n12
 Pillinger, Renate 37n32
 Pinius, Joannes 185
 Piusi, Franco 200n72
 Pohl, Walter 1n2
 Poncelet, Albert 108n9, 146n29
 Poncina, Massimiliano 37n32, 41n63, 42n64, 53
 Popović, Ivana 74n28, 76n40, 141n2
 Popović, Vladislav 74n28, 76, 141n2
 Praet, Danny 17, 149n39, 155n46, 166, 168
 Prileszky, Johannes Baptista 124
 Quentin, Henri 20n88, 21, 22n105.109, 38n43.45, 145n22.25
 Radan, G.T.B. 10n51
 Rapp, Claudia 2n5
 Renaud, Geneviève 22n108, 23n110, 39n49
 Ritig, Svetozar 15, 173, 182n3
 Rizos, Efthymios 14n67, 77, 84, 85n64-66, 108n11, 110, 112n33, 124-125, 135n118, 147, 149n38, 158, 163n60, 168n64, 172n82
 Roberts, Michael 65-66
 Roncaioli, Cecilia 16-17, 21n99, 27n1, 33n17, 34, 37-38, 39n47.50, 43n70.77, 45

- Rösch, Gerhard 116n61
 Ruinart, Theodoricus 15, 53, 77, 78n44, 92-93,
 124, 147, 148n37, 150-151, 157-158
 Ruiz-Bueno, Daniel 93, 116n60, 119n71,
 122n85, 124, 158
 Sághy, Marianne 16n77
 Salamito, Jean-Marie 3n12
 Salzman, Michele R. 1n3
 Šašel Kos, Marjeta 74n28, 111n23
 Sauget, Joseph-Marie 148n37
 Scalon, Cesare 184n42
 Schäferdiek, Knut 2n7, 3n14
 Scherrer, Peter 74n28, 111n23
 Schlange-Schöningen, Heinrich 13n66, 16n77
 Schmidt, Peter Lebrecht 84n63, 155n44
 Schoolman, Edward M. 16n77
 Schwab, Ute 2n8
 Seeliger, Hans Reinhard 112n35, 114n53,
 116n60, 119n71
 Setton, Kenneth M. 117n65, 134n116
 Seyfarth, Wolfgang 89n87.88
 Simonetti, Manlio 6, 16, 80, 82-83, 87, 91-92,
 119-120, 122-123, 132n104
 Smirnov-Brkić, Aleksandra 69n3, 84, 147,
 149n38, 158, 163n60, 168n64, 172n82
 Sodini, Jean-Pierre 75n34
 Solin, Heikki 147n31
 Sosztarics, Ottó 41n58
 Stojkovski, Boris 69n3, 73
 Streeter, Joseph 8n44
 Tamas, Hajnalka 15n70.72, 16n77, 64n126,
 65n132, 85n67, 88n77, 89n87, 103n126,
 108n8, 116n57, 118n70, 124-125,
 132n102, 135n122, 141n1.3, 142n10,
 144n19, 145n23, 147n32, 148n35,
 150n42, 151, 156n49.52, 158, 163n59,
 173n1, 182, 183n39.41, 184n43
 Testini, Pasquale 23n115, 40n53.54, 114,
 115n56
 Thomas, Edith B. 11n60, 40n56
 Thunø, Erik 41n63, 42n64
 Tóth, Endre 9n50
 Tóth, Péter 14n67, 173n3
 Trettel, Giulio 200n72
 Trzeciak, Frances 112n34, 113n40
 Valentini, Roberto 36n31
 Várady, László 10n53
 Veronese, Maria 37n32, 41n63, 42n65, 53
 Vinzent, Markus 16n77
 Von Stockhausen, Annette 2n7, 12n62
 Vuković, Marijana 69n3, 72, 73n18, 76
 Vulić, Hrvoje 111n23.25.27-28
 Watts, Edward 89n88
 Whitby, Michael 8n44
 Williams, Daniel H. 2n7, 11n58.61
 Wilpert, Joseph 114n50
 Wolfram, Herwig 1n4
 Yasin, Ann Marie 3n12
 Young, Frances M. 16n78
 Zeiller, Jacques 15, 36n31, 70n4, 72, 87n76,
 108n6, 109-110, 112n30, 114n54.55,
 119n73, 122, 147n33, 148n36, 173, 176,
 182n38
 Zucchetti, Giuseppe 36n31

This volume immerses the reader into the history of a Roman province situated on the middle course of the Danube. It examines the development of Christianity in late antique Pannonia based on a selection of five hagiographic dossiers referring to Pannonian martyrs of the Great Persecution (303-305 AD): Quirinus of Siscia (BHL 7035-7039), Irenaeus of Sirmium (BHL 4466), Pollio of Cibalae (BHL 6869), Syneros of Sirmium (BHL 7595-7596), and Donatus, Venustus and Hermogenes (BHL 2309). The hagiographies that narrate their martyrdom preserve a modicum of historical truth in the events concerned, but are also representative for the social and cultural landscape of the community that generated them.

The five texts analysed here, once properly contextualised, their literary layers filtered, offer a mirror into the hopes and worries of their redactors and the audience they sought to address. In that, they proved instrumental in the process of transition to a predominantly Christian society and in coping with the Christological and Trinitarian debates that divided Pannonian Christianity in the later fourth – early fifth centuries.

